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Study abroad: perspectives on transitions to adulthood

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Submitted in fulfilment of the degree

Doctor of Philosophy

University of Sussex

March 2014

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in part, to another University for the award of any other degree.

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UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

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SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

STUDY ABROAD: PERSPECTIVES ON TRANSITIONS TO ADULTHOOD

Summary

The Irish *immrama* literary style seems the most appropriate way to represent student narratives based on their study abroad experiences in Ireland. The chapters containing the *immrama* of students are an ethnographic experiment in which the reflexivity students demonstrated through the interview process is presented in narrative form. This writing style provides the context for the examination of issues related to academic aspirations, professional, and personal wandering, and how study abroad experiences and tourism behaviour contribute to the transition to adulthood. The *immrama* are located in the even-numbered chapters.

Daily challenges and student-organised travel experiences that develop as part of a study abroad have the potential to transform the participants. Eight months of fieldwork in the Republic of Ireland during the 2008/9 academic year revealed the types of activities students independently organised during their period as educational tourists in an international context and the nature of the learning outcomes. The most reported outcome of their sojourn was increased self-confidence. Wandering among academic settings, geographic locations, and social interactions resulted in the development of intercultural competences and the shift in frames of reference.

Chapter 3 recounts the theoretical and epistemological basis for this thesis. Anthropology provides the basis for discussion of adulthood, liminality, and the development of friendship through learning opportunities inherent in study abroad programmes. Andragogical theories identify and define adult learning as independent and student-directed. This approach allows for discussion of learning such as intercultural

competences, the outcomes of studying abroad, settings that foster personal development, experiences that transform students, and learning as a transition to adulthood.

Chapters 5 and 7 examine the opportunities for learning and personal development that result from independent travel. Students developed friendship groups by living and travelling together. The establishment of friendship networks facilitated intercultural competences through interactions with other international students and the travel that they undertook together. Students did not think of themselves as tourists in Limerick, but did when travelling on the continent. At other times, they needed to host guests who came to visit. Study abroad was not without risks associated with credit for courses taken, personal risks associated with travel, and online risks in the use of social media. Travel and overcoming challenges resulted in the development of a sense of self-confidence and self-reliance. Students felt they learned more from travelling than they did in their courses.

Chapter 9 presents the methodology that was established to conduct this research and the strategies used to collect data. The multi-sited field combined with multiple methods of data collection yielded a rich set of data. This writer participated in the activities with students during the fieldwork period, becoming an observant wanderer. Data collection was designed to elicit students' points of view about the value and challenges of the experience.

Educational ethnography in the future will need to consider issues relating to multi-sited ethnography, the researcher as a primary *site*, and autoethnography. The relationship between the students and the observer became important because as memory, storytelling and writing revealed the power of reflexivity, the ethnographer was challenged to represent the intertextuality of the process.

Chapter 10 identifies the implications of methodological positioning: the importance of wandering as a legitimate strategy for learning, accounting for intertextuality in fieldwork and analysis, and the need to reconceptualise the educational ethnographic field.

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

CBIE	Canadian Bureau of International Education
CEUROS	Centre for European Studies, University of Limerick
DCU	Dublin City University
EU	European Union
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
ERASMUS	European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students
ESL	English-as-a-Second Language
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
MIC	Mary Immaculate College
NCAD	National College of Art and Design, Ireland
NUIG	National University of Ireland, Galway
NUIM	National University of Ireland, Maynooth
OECD	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
RCIS	Royal College of Surgeons of Ireland
SNA	Social Network Analysis
TCD	Trinity College Dublin
UCC	University College, Cork
UCD	University College, Dublin
UL	University of Limerick
UK	United Kingdom
US	The United States of America

Chapter 1 Introduction

Like the line that goes out for a walk, the path of the wayfarer wends hither, thither, and may even pause here and there before moving on... While on the trail the wayfarer is always somewhere, yet every 'somewhere' is on the way to somewhere else. (Ingold 2007: 81)

1.1 *Introduction to this thesis*

Students learn from a variety of experiences when they are in a university setting with different academic requirements and expectations to which they must adapt. But there is more than simply academics to consider in relation to the international experience of studying abroad or other forms of educational exchange schemes. Every moment is a learning opportunity, to learn about themselves, the world around them, and to experience new ways of being in that world. For some it is the first time away from home. They might live with other international students and learn new languages, discuss new subjects, try new foods, or wear new clothes. Each day student travellers struggle to accomplish daily tasks, such as buying groceries or managing transportation. Each individual experience may have lessons about the social world that the student learns, but the cumulative effect as they wander from place to place, person to person, experience to experience, is the development of a new relationship with that world. With the successful accomplishment of each mundane task, they become more confident in their own abilities. It is within this world of seemingly ordinary experiences that my thesis has oriented its lens.

Every year students embark on international journeys as part of their studies. Some travel in an effort to find their family heritage (Comp 2008) while others participate in professional internships (van 't Klooster *et al.* 2008). During the 2008/2009 academic year the OECD estimated that over 3.3 million tertiary students studied outside their country of citizenship (OECD 2010: 32). For the purposes of this thesis, a 'student' is a person regularly enrolled in a full-time higher education degree-programme who is studying in Ireland for at least one semester. Students' expectations are many, but invariably the experience of living in another culture leads to unanticipated outcomes. Such

unpredictability provides opportunities for learning that are beyond the classroom. Kottler (1997: 63) has suggested that any travel has the potential to change a person on a fundamental level, where travellers can experience ‘increased flexibility, independence, and creative thinking’. Nevertheless, is this a universal experience? Do the circumstances matter in providing opportunities for learning, for overcoming challenges, for failing, for adapting, and for expanding their understanding of themselves, and of the wider world? Are students transformed by their experiences abroad?

1.2 International learning sites

Ash (2006: 246) suggests that Humboldtian universities, popularised in Germany and used as a foundation for the development of research universities in the United States, are based on four educational philosophies. These philosophies are: freedom of teaching and learning (*Lehr-und-Lernfreiheit*); unity of teaching and research (*Einheit von Lehre und Forschung*); unity of science and scholarship (*Einheit der Wissenschaft*); and the primacy of ‘pure’ science (*Bildung durch Wissenschaft*) over specialised personal training (*Ausbildung, Spezialschulmodell*). Within this conceptualisation, a university functions as a collection of independent students and researchers who choose when to come together, and which subjects they are accountable to learn. Learning is important for its own sake and professional specialisation is rejected in favour of ‘an approach to learning, an attitude of mind, a skill and a capacity to think rather than specialised knowledge’ (Ash 2006: 246).

Von Humboldt’s self-cultivation (*bildung*) is grounded in a system of subject selection and character formation in order to develop an educational pedagogy that removes all obstacles to individual self-cultivation. Such a pedagogical approach reflected the social climate of the late 18th century that Sorkin (1983: 56) has described as ‘the deterioration of the state structures and the search for new forms of sociability’. Von Humboldt’s plan involved bringing all students together, regardless of their financial means and heredity, and placing them together in the same classes in order to participate in a general education programme with specialised training to follow. This enabled the social mobility and

cultivation of each student according to their skills, interests, ambitions and abilities. According to Sorkin (1983: 68), ‘the process of self-formation occurs in relationship to the world, it exists for its own sake’. Von Humboldt suggests that *bildung* refers to ‘something both higher and more inward, namely the dispositions of mind which, from the knowledge and the feeling of the total intellectual and moral endeavour, flows harmoniously into sensibility and character’ (in Gadamer 1975: 9). While a radical redesign of university education for its time, the tides of educational reform were already spreading throughout Europe.

If universities are expected to be sites where students form their adult identities then the question arises as to what types of learning sites offer the most potential for *bildung*, or self-transformation? There has been increasing debate as to the nature and importance of sites of learning. For example, the physical circumstances in which to maximise student learning have been a contested debate within educationalist fields. Early experiential pedagogues, such as Dewey (1998), have argued for a combination of classroom and experiential learning in order to develop civic responsibility. More recently, others have argued that students should move outside of this formalised space thereby learning from social experience and learning-by-doing in the real world, outside of the confines of institutionalised learning (Illich 1970; Robinson 2001). Increasingly, educators are beginning to assert the need for complementary spaces of learning that include not only the physical classroom but also what can be defined as ‘lifewide’ learning, thereby incorporating ‘multiple contexts, such as work, at home and in our social lives’ (OECD 2007: 11). In this sense, the student has the potential to learn at any time, through wandering at all times, in all places, and through all interactions.

In this thesis, I present my own journey as an ethnographic case within the ‘lifewide’ learning context of studying abroad. While the definition of international student mobility in the 21st century has been only recently clarified (King *et al.* 2010), it is certainly not a new phenomenon. Students in the medieval European context were known to travel extensively in search of medical training (Grell *et al.* 2010), refuge, and touring (de Ridder-Symoens 1996). New forms of student mobility have emerged in the contemporary period

of higher education. For example, beginning in the late 18th-century, *The Grand Tour*, organised by American professors, took students around Europe, sometimes for years at a time where students learned simply by being in that place (Brodsky-Porges 1981). These were not average students, however, as Phipps and Gonzalez (2004: 53-4) note that language learning was a bourgeois tool to communicate with local residents that they met on their tours, and reserved especially for upper middle-class women. More recently, students have begun to move independently and in increasing numbers. American students began to arrive at Oxford as part of the Rhodes scholar programme to educate a new elite class of statesmen, established in 1902 (Schaeper & Schaeper 1998). Increasing American scholarly focus similarly began in the 1970s with the intention of examining and promoting international exchanges (Burn 1980). While each of these examples presents instances or patterns of mobility by students, learning was not accomplished solely in a classroom or a library. Students moving through new spaces learned new things, thought about new ideas, and interacted with new people.

I am particularly interested in understanding how students learn within this context. By examining short-term study abroad and exchange students, I develop in this thesis an understanding of the importance of learning from all aspects of life. For the purposes of this study, a 'student' is a person who is studying abroad, having left their home country to enrol in a foreign university for at least three months, or a complete academic semester.

I have chosen to create an analysis through exploring issues raised as part of my data collection process rather than using specific research questions. In the first instance, I had created a series of specific research questions as part of my research outline in the first year of my doctorate which, given the limited access I was able to arrange in the field (Section 9.4.3) I was unable to answer. This is not an uncommon occurrence in doctoral research as Dunne, Pryor and Yates (2005: 166) suggest that once a project commences the questions may seem 'slightly off-centre or even tangential when the thesis finally comes to be written.' During the fieldwork process, I began to explore new issues related to international student experiences that were inspired by my interviewees. The students' ideas and vocabulary to express their experiences re-shaped my literature searches.

Similarly, as I conducted interviews, presented my initial results, and collaborated with colleagues on other projects further fields of literature became more relevant to my discussions here. As a result, I organised my fieldwork, and subsequent analysis, with an open design ‘in which interpretation takes place through inductive analysis’ (Dunne *et al.* 2005: 83). Therefore, I was not trying to confirm a hypothesis, but rather trying to find a new analytical approach by comparing several theoretical positions (transformative learning, educational tourism, and intercultural learning) to the data I had collected. Extensive research has already been carried out that examines student experiences of international travel. Anthropological analyses of such experiences are limited to classroom ethnographies, however (Levinson & Pollock 2011; Spindler 2000). As a result, the ethnography I have written here offers a blended analysis by incorporating anthropological and educationalist theoretical foundations with the educational ethnographic field. I have chosen to compare these three distinct theoretical approaches – transformative learning, educational tourism, and intercultural learning – in order to elucidate both the phenomenon of studying abroad and the application of theoretical models to this phenomenon.

1.3 Fieldwork design

This thesis focuses on experiences of American and Canadian international students in Ireland. This group of study abroad students originate from English-speaking countries that share some aspects of Irish linguistic and cultural heritage. This shared heritage and language allows me to analyse types of student learning by removing the stress of language proficiency, which can have negative effects on personal development amongst international students (Pedersen 1991).

International students composed 11.8 % of the total student population in Ireland during the 2008/9 academic year (see Table 1). The American and Canadian students represented 29% of the total international students in Ireland (see Table 2), but also composed 65.6% of the total native English-speaker cohort (United States, Canada, UK, India). This represents a significant international student demographic both within Ireland and as a major destination for North American students. This was a geographically diverse

group of students originating from across the United States and Canada, and who were represented in all major Irish universities.

Table 1: Irish enrolment statistics, 2008/2009 academic year

2008/9 Academic Year	Male	Female	Total	% Female
Students Enrolled	38,139	53, 807	91, 226	59.0 %
Incoming International Students ⁺	4,672	6,114	10,786	56.7 %

Source: HEA (2009). Full-time enrolments in the university sector in the academic year 2008/2009.

⁺ International enrolment numbers are included in the overall student enrolments.

The Republic of Ireland ranks amongst the top ten study abroad destinations for both American and Canadian students (see Table 3). These top-10 countries of origin (7,663 students) represented 72.0% of the total international student population in Ireland. This is a complex group of students, moving geographically between universities, cities, and countries. I was able to contact 1.92% of them during my fieldwork (Table 4).

Given this diverse and mobile demographic, data collection for this thesis involved significant fieldwork based in Limerick and supplemented by research visits to other cities. In Stage 1, I became a Visiting Research Fellow at the Centre for European Studies (CEUROS), in the Department of Politics and Public Administration at the University of Limerick. Simultaneously, I conducted semi-structured interviews with international students from across disciplines and programmes.

Table 2: Top 10 countries of origin of international students in Ireland (2009)

Ranking	Country of Origin	Total Male	Total Female	Overall Total	Percentage of Total Mobile Students ⁺⁺
1	United States	795	1736	2531	23.5%
2	Great Britain ⁺	533	675	1208	11.2%
3	Malaysia	400	585	985	9.1%
4	China	455	395	850	7.9%
5	Canada	252	341	593	5.5%
6	Germany	172	268	440	4.1%
7	France	181	184	365	3.4%
8	India	217	103	320	3.0%
9	Italy	131	130	261	2.4%
10	Poland	66	144	210	1.9%
Total		3202	4561	7760	72.0% ⁺⁺

⁺ Great Britain statistics do not include those students originating from Northern Ireland. Students originating in Northern Ireland are incorporated into the overall Irish student statistics and are therefore not represented in this table.

⁺⁺ 72.0 % of total students are represented in top ten countries of origin (Total Students: 53, 087 female + 38,139 male = 91,226, where 10,786 students are classified as 'international' based on their country of origin (6,114 female and 4,672 male).

The full listing of international students' country of origin can be viewed in Appendix 1.

Source: HEA (2009) HEA 2008/09 Annual Statistics (Uni).

Table 3: Top destinations for North American students studying abroad 2008/2009

Rank	American Students ⁺		Canadian Students ⁺⁺	
	Destinations	Participation	Destinations	Participation
1	United Kingdom	31, 342	United States	29, 209
2	Italy	27, 362	United Kingdom	6, 557
3	Spain	24, 169	France	1, 378
4	France	16, 910	New Zealand	645
5	China	13, 674	Ireland	575
6	Australia	11, 140	Germany	565
7	Germany	8, 330	Poland	375
8	Mexico	7, 320	Japan	372
9	Ireland	6, 858	Switzerland	296
10	Costa Rica	6, 363	South Korea	220

⁺ Source: Institute of International Education. (2011). "Top 25 Destinations of U.S. Study Abroad Students, 2008/09 -2009/10."

⁺⁺ Source: OECDStatExtracts (2008)

Table 4: Potential students to be recruited for this study in Ireland 2008/9 academic year

Irish University	Canada		United States		Total Interviewed or Surveyed⁺
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
UCD	66	67	194	354	1
UCC	43	45	208	484	0
NUIG	8	30	196	532	33
TCD	42	79	105	211	0
NUIM	0	0	51	17	0
DCU	1	1	34	67	0
UL	11	14	18	35	26
MIC	0	0	1	1	0
NCAD	0	0	0	1	0
RCSI	81	105	34	45	0
Total:	252	341	795	1736	60
	593		2531		1.92%

Note: Institutions without any Canadian or American international students during the 2008/9 year have been omitted. Full names of institutions can be located in the List of Abbreviations.

⁺ This total represents the possible students contacted from the United States and Canada.

Source: HEA (2009) HEA 2008/09 Annual Statistics.

In Stage 2, I conducted interviews with students from the National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG) and University College Dublin (UCD) in order to increase the depth of my analysis in determining the impact of study abroad experience on American and Canadian students. Multiple methods of data collection and comparison were essential in order to ensure that my results from interviews did not present a geographically anomalous case study. These include regular participant observation whenever possible, an online questionnaire to increase the number of participants, and participating in the virtual activities of my informants. Finally, I was also able to access secondary sources not available at the UL library. These methods are represented in Table 5.

Table 5: Research methods schematic

Method	Stage 1 (Sept 2008 – April 2009)	Stage 2 (April 2009 – July 2009)
Location	UL, NUIG	UCD
In-person Interviews	20 interviews with students	1 interview with student
Participant Observation	13 periods of participant observation amongst students of CEUROS including social activities, guest lecturing, and departmental seminars	1 undergraduate guest lecture within CEUROS
Questionnaire	Not Applicable	107 complete or partial surveys completed
Virtual Participation	Facebook usage to identify and connect with students to set up interviews	Facebook usage to identify and connect with students to set up interview
Secondary Sources	Library and archival work at UL	Document retrieval online

Upon completion of Stage 2, I returned to the University of Sussex to complete my data analysis and writing up stages. Throughout this process, I employed the ethical guidelines set out by my university and the Association of Social Anthropologists (ASA 1999).

1.4 Immrama: a literary tradition

Medieval Ireland has been constructed as an inspirational time in which monks (who later became saints) ‘were impelled by that triad of love of wandering, love of learning, and love of the spiritual that was characteristic of the ancient hero–wanderer of the immrama tales’ (Martin 2010: 9). Within medieval Irish literature a genre of heroic tales, *immram* (singular, *immrama* in the plural) provide detailed accounts of those who have gone wandering into the wilderness, beyond the known world, and returned to report their experiences. One of the most prominent of these tales are the stories of Saint Brendan (c. 484-577 AD) who travelled on a cyclical voyage with his fellow monks for seven years in search of the ‘Promised Land of the Saints’ (Mackley 2008: 4). It is not simply enough for Brendan and his brethren to go out into the world and learn, but the wanderer must also return home,

share their experiences with others, and thereby reintegrate themselves into society after their period of liminality at sea. Saint Columbanus (c. 543-615 AD) similarly set out from Ireland (conceived as a paradise) for Europe in order to come closer to God by wandering in the wilderness (Richards 2010). This literary genre is my inspiration for including narratives of the wanderings of students studying abroad in Ireland that I have placed in the even-numbered chapters of this thesis.

There may be some irony in an approach where a student investigates student behaviour. Anthropologists are determined to learn about everyday social worlds, to meet new people and to try new things. To that end, my wanderings have not only informed my analysis that follows, but are a window into understanding the learning outcomes of such circumstances that are stimulating and ever changing. I have chosen to write in a narrative form about my wanderings throughout my thesis because, as Dunne *et al.* (2005: 171) have suggested:

To explain yourself you need to tell a good story, to construct a narrative, so the evolution of the methodology can receive coherence through being linked to narrative of the identity of the researcher.

Therefore, while I represent the experiences of my informants in narrative form, I have also written about my experiences and reflections on the fieldwork in order to create a reflexive analysis of ethnographic methods that I will outline in Chapter 9. Throughout this thesis I strive to create an ‘intertextuality’ (Dunne *et al.* 2005: 143) between narratives, analysis, and theoretical and empirical texts available about study abroad experiences. Each of these texts informs the others at all stages. I therefore attempt to connect them in a narrative form, using the stories recounted to me by my informants to ground my discussion and guide my analysis.

1.4.1 *Immrama* and learning through wandering

Tracy (2002: 226) has defined the *immrama* tradition as ‘voyages “through strange seas of Thought”’ without a specific destination. Rather, it is a journey through the real world, but

framed within imaginative adventures in order to investigate the explorations of alternative realities. Martin (2010: 93) highlights this when she suggests that in the *immrama* narratives, the learning experienced by wanderers is not the traditional, linear, and progressive learning. Rather, the learning experienced in the *immrama* is ‘curvilinear and unpredictable and always enticing the learner to wander further’. Such wandering does not begin or end, but is continuous and impulsive. The learners experience what they wish or need as they wander through the world, finding lessons wherever they go. This is a form of wandering not only for the protagonists of *immrama*, but the readers also wander through their own realms of thought and imagination with the protagonists. In this sense, *immrama* represent ‘journeys of the mind, allegorical imaginings of absolute states, charting the soul’s travels in a realm of absolutes and archetypes, symbols and metaphors’ (Tracy 2002: 232). With this in mind, I have included my own *immram*, which documents my learning through wandering, and is included between academic chapters to reflect the complementary nature of fieldwork.

Wandering away from a central place in order to find oneself is not unique to the Irish case. Course (2010) has suggested a similar idea of a ‘centrifugal person’ who becomes an individual through the relationships they build with others. Whether in the Andean Mountains or in the fields of Ireland, the students I talked to recount their wider journeys with friends, beyond the city, beyond the county and beyond the waters that seemed to offer the richest opportunities for learning. This wandering creates opportunities for each student to develop a singularly personal *immram*, their own ‘uncharted, but not aimless, voyage undertaken without maps or schedules or planning of any sort’ (Martin 2010: 10). I argue, therefore, that while traditional *immrama*, such as the voyage of Saint Brendan (Mackley 2008), were written long ago, modern study abroad students undertake similar, unplanned voyages into the unknown and must similarly find personal relevance and importance in their understanding of the world around them.

Students wander between these cultures by virtue of their mobility. They have no clear expectations as to the outcomes of this wandering and immerse themselves in strange and foreign places as part of their *immram*. My thesis exhibits similar wanderings in

thought. Based in the subfield of anthropology of education, I manoeuvre through ideas, methodologies, and findings in order to understand the experiences of such educational digressions from the expected educational activities of classroom instruction.

I have found the *immram* literary genre helpful in narrating the outcomes of unintended adventures in the unknown. To aid my readers, I have clearly marked each even-numbered chapter with the following image (Image 1) to create an impression of reading a medieval Irish *immram*. Normal text represents my own wandering, the stories I have collected that relate how I conducted my fieldwork and my shared experiences with my informants. The italicised sections of these chapters represent the wandering of my informants, their stories, their perspectives, and their reflections. I conclude each *immrama* chapter with some final reflections on how these experiences contribute to my understanding of study abroad experiences. The names of informants in these sections have been changed to protect their identity. Responses collected through the online survey are recorded here as ‘Respondent A’ in order to distinguish their responses from the more extensive narratives I collected as part of the interview process.



Image 1: The icon marking *immram* sections within this thesis.
Source: Irene Patuzzi, 2013. © The Author.

1.5 The anthropology of wandering

In recent years, Ingold has outlined an anthropology of wandering that is particularly pertinent to this thesis, both in terms of fieldwork and writing *immrama*. At its most fundamental level, Ingold and Vergunst (2008: 1) have suggested that ‘walking is a

profoundly social activity: that in their timings, rhythms and inflections, the feet respond as much as does the voice to the presence and activity of others'. Indeed, this seems to be the fundamental nature of anthropological fieldwork as well. Ethnographers are no longer sitting on their verandas (made famous by Malinowski (1922)) and watching the world go by; instead they go out and wander in new social worlds, meet new people along the way, and represent those experiences in ethnographic writing. The very act of completing fieldwork, how we organise ourselves, how we interact with informants, and how we move through our field site expresses our 'thoughts and feelings that have already been imparted through an education in cultural precepts and proprieties' (Ingold & Vergunst 2008: 2). In order to better understand the lives, experiences, and expectations of our informants, as anthropologists we must make our 'way *through* a world-in-form, in a movement that is both rhythmically resonant with the movement of others around us – whose journeys' we share or whose paths we cross' (Ingold & Vergunst 2008: 2). This thesis represents my wandering through educational contexts, through my doctoral experience, through fieldwork, and through the process of becoming an *anthropologist*. Each of these movements has no clear destination, and it would be difficult to accurately pinpoint the single initial moment that my journey began. Each of these environments provides new forms of social relationships as well, new colleagues, new informants, each of which influenced me in some way. Some encounters are brief, such as those recounted throughout the *immrama* of this thesis, some informants I will never meet because they completed my online survey. Others have been with me for longer legs of the journey, and I am grateful for their support. I am sure this project will propel me to meet even more people in the years to come.

Lee and Ingold (2006: 71) have suggested that ethnographers engage with the field by wandering in three ways:

- 1) in our analyses we describe how we looked at and interacted with the field;
- 2) we use pressures in the field as time for 'personal reflection on the self'; and
- 3) engage in 'embodied experiences and practices' with the people we meet along the way.

I have chosen the *immrama* as a narrative form to communicate my doctoral experiences and bring my readers along with me as fellow wayfarers, who are ‘neither placeless nor place-bound but place-making’ (Ingold 2007: 10).

1.6 Thesis structure

In this chapter, I outline my orientation towards international learning sites, how I designed my fieldwork, how I was influenced by the medieval literary tradition of *immrama* in my orientation towards writing ethnography, and how conceptualisations of wandering influenced my research. In the following chapter, I begin my *immram* by recounting my entrance to the field of studying abroad in Ireland, and reflect on the importance of such introductions for anthropological ethnographies. This section geographically introduces how I will be writing the *immrama* chapters of this thesis (Chapters 2, 4, 6, and 8) and how the style differs from my analytic chapters (Chapters 3, 5, 7, and 9).

Chapter 3 replicates my intellectual wandering as part of this thesis. I begin by establishing the field of ‘anthropology of adulthood’ and the potential of liminality to understand this transition. I explore how young people learn to become adults and the roles friendship can play in this process. With this foundation, I define how I am using the term *adult* in this thesis. Androgological theory posits that adults learn in a different manner than children, and with this theoretical foundation, I explore two fields of literature to complement this framework: intercultural competences and educational tourism. I examine the nature of intercultural competences that are expected to result from an academic period abroad: linguistic; sociolinguistic; discursive; strategic; socio-cultural; and social competences. I then examine the settings that potentially foster the development of intercultural competences, namely fieldwork and independent activity, and reflect on the role friendship plays in this process. Once tourist activities are established as a setting for transformative learning and the development of intercultural competences, I analyse the educational tourism fields of literature to flesh out the nature of such settings.

Chapter 4 is the first *immrama* chapter to introduce four students whom I met while conducting fieldwork: Rose, Yeomi, Lin, and Monika. These four students represent four different forms of academic aspirations for study abroad opportunities: a last chance, practical exercise, obtaining postgraduate qualifications to facilitate future mobility, and social experiences respectively. I reflect on the events that arise from independent travel that can foster personal development, and explain how my interactions with these students changed my orientation to my field, and influenced how I conducted my research.

In Chapter 5, I examine the travel behaviour of my informants as they studied abroad in the Republic of Ireland for at least one semester. I analyse the development of intercultural competences that result from independent travel, students incorporating identities of both *tourist* and *host*, their travel patterns, destinations, and behaviours. Once this has been established, I examine how friendship networks support this behaviour, and facilitate opportunities for transformative learning and the development of intercultural competences. I conclude by examining their travel experiences in their own words, and the outcomes they reported from independent travel activities.

Chapter 6 is the third *immrama*, which recounts the professional and personal wandering my informants organised outside of formal classroom activities. The narratives of Michael, Carolyn, and Teresa provide the foundation for analysis in the following chapter.

In Chapter 7, I examine the personal development that arose from touristic behaviours of study abroad students. I begin by examining the nature of the data they discussed with me in interviews and survey responses to determine the nature of reflexivity students reflect while reporting their personal learning outcomes because of studying abroad. I then examine the risks students overcame as part of their study abroad experiences: academic risk, risks associated with travel, and online risks. Once these risks have been mitigated, I reflect upon their development of self-confidence, and how self-confidence contributes to a sense of *adulthood*.

Chapter 8 is the final *immrama* chapter. In it, I examine the narratives of Jennifer, Elizabeth, and Natalie, three students who significantly changed their academic and professional goals because of their studies abroad. New opportunities to engage in touristic behaviours influenced students who decided to change directions.

In Chapter 9, I discuss ethnography from a methodological point of view, and examine how various methods I employed to collect data influenced both its collection and analysis. I begin by outlining my research philosophy, and my orientation towards multi-sited ethnography. With this foundation, I describe why I situated myself as the centre of my field site as part of a reflexive and autoethnographic project. I then reflect upon the inherent intertextuality of data collection and analysis in ethnographic projects, including the characterisation of field notebooks as data, interviews as social encounters, and my role as observant wanderer while I was an ethnographer in the field. With this positionality established, I explain how I conducted my analysis and discuss the nature of ethnographic memory and storytelling in relation to the writing process generally.

Chapter 10 concludes this thesis by reflecting on the implications of my findings. First, I outline the connection between study abroad and doctoral fieldwork experiences. I then outline how the concept of wandering was a useful conceptual tool to understand that the destination of travel is not as important as the movement itself to facilitate personal development. I then outline how my writing conventions offer ethnographic writing as an analytical vehicle to incorporate personal narratives and autoethnography into educational ethnographies. Finally, I reflect on the ‘site’ in educational ethnographies, and argue that it should be expanded in order to include student-led, serendipitous wandering that students can participate in at any time, and anywhere.

There are many journeys represented in this thesis, and the thesis is a journey in and of itself. As a reader, I hope that you will wayfare with me, and wander through your own memories and experiences, as I investigate international students’ transitions to adulthood.

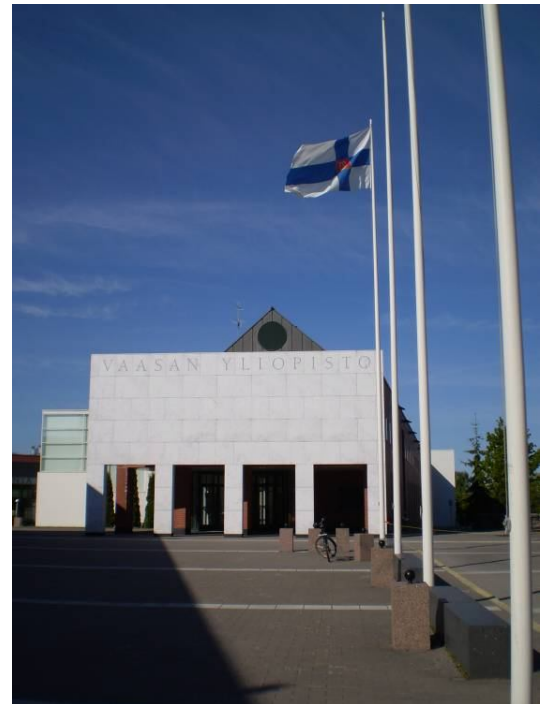
Chapter 2 Performing the field



On a glorious sunny day at the end of May, 2008, I found myself combining the practical necessity of eating lunch with the instinctual desire to enjoy the sunshine while I could before I returned to Blighty (a commonly affectionate term for Britain). I was not alone in this aspiration, of course. At any given time there were between five to seven people sitting around our table outside the cafeteria at the University of Vaasa, catching up on each other's news and making new connections. Upon hearing that I was about to start my fieldwork in Limerick City, the two professors who joined us both shared their students' experiences of Limerick with me. Their ERASMUS exchange students were focusing on English literature and the University of Limerick was a popular destination. The Swedish professor recounted stories of students disappointed in their academic activities, which they considered the point of their exchange. They seemed disappointed and were older than their Irish contemporaries who were always set apart socially and academically. The

Danish professor was surprised by this, as his students had loved Limerick and he was quick to recommend it. Little did I realise at that time, of course, that this debate would in some way underlie most of my interviews throughout my fieldwork. Our time in the sun was short lived, of course, and was only a brief reprieve before we returned to the classrooms of the conference.

Photo 1: University of Vaasa, Finland.



Source: The Author, 2008.

2.1 Reflection

Anthropologists locate themselves in the field within their ethnographies. This is generally located early on in the thesis or monograph, and helps to orient the reader in terms of the direction of the ethnographer and how she relates to her field. I have borrowed Coleman and Collins idea of ‘Performing the Field’ in order to highlight the fact that this thesis challenges conventional assumptions relating to constructed ethnographic fields as bounded spaces. Rather, I prefer to imagine the field as ‘constantly in a process of becoming, rather than being understood as fixed (“being”) in space and time, just as the audience for the performance can shift between academic and research locations’ (Coleman & Collins 2006a: 13). In this case, I have chosen to recount an early experience from my doctoral work, during my own liminal time when I was waiting for the academic year to begin and to start my project. It seemed as if everywhere I went, I found people happy to talk about their studies in Limerick, and my trip to Vaasa represents my first official trip after being approved to conduct fieldwork by my university.

I could have chosen any event to locate myself in the field. A trip to Finland seems appropriate to me, as I was travelling just as my informants were. Several had completed trips before their academic semesters began, such as Natalie (Section 8.6) who travelled to the Czech Republic. We all arrived in Ireland approximately the same week, but from different places and after having travelled prior to our arrivals.

This episode demonstrates that in some respects the anthropologist never really leaves the field, and reflects the modern condition of fieldwork, where anthropologists are in constant movement between the field and somewhere else, whether that is an academic conference, home institutions for administrative work, or visiting family and friends.

In the remaining *immrama* in this thesis, I compare my own experiences with those of my informants. This chapter is meant to locate myself in relation to them. It also illustrates the structure within my thesis of presenting *immrama* in even numbered chapters. In the following chapter, I will begin by locating my research within the academic literatures that constitute one form of intertextuality for my analysis.

Chapter 3 Epistemological wanderings

Youth likes to wander.

- Irish proverb.

3.1 *Introduction*

In this chapter, I wish to reproduce the intellectual wandering I undertook throughout the process of writing this thesis. While I certainly did not read this literature in the order it is presented here, this chapter represents how the interconnected fields of intercultural learning, educational tourism, transformative learning, and the anthropology of adulthood coalesced as I undertook my fieldwork and completed my analysis here. I was interested in educational tourism from the outset of my doctoral proposal. Transformative learning theories emerged from the narratives generated by my informants and my examiners recommended the field of intercultural learning theory. Together, these fields allowed me to articulate the experiences of my informants and my conceptualisation of study abroad experiences as opportunities for transitions to adulthood.

I begin the next section by reflecting on the anthropology of adulthood and transitions between identities to better contextualise how my informants regarded their semester abroad. I conclude the section with an analysis of the events that might offer North American young people a sense of adulthood, whether or not that is through education, parenthood, financial independence, or travel. Second, I examine educationalist theories of adult learning, explore the similarities between transformative and intercultural learning, and outline the educational settings that foster intercultural learning and the establishment of student identities. Third, I define intercultural competences that can be developed as part of study abroad programmes. In the remainder of this chapter, I outline the phenomenon of educational tourism by examining the benefits of learning through

travel. I reflect on what motivates students to travel, the importance of their travel accounts, and how travel fosters self-confidence.

3.2 Anthropology of adulthood and the role of education

Perhaps as a result of the critical reception (Feinberg 1988; Freeman 1983) of early ethnographic examinations of adolescence such as Mead's 1930 classic *Coming of Age in Samoa* (Mead 2001), the field of anthropology has largely been uninterested in examining long-term transitional periods into adulthood. More than eighty years later, the term 'adulthood' continues to be noticeably absent from the *Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology* (Barnard & Spencer 1996b). This idea of a transition period from childhood is also absent from the emerging field of anthropology of childhood literature being developed by Lancy (2008) and youth studies (Amit & Dyck 2011; Blatterer 2009; Bloustien 2003). For example, Bloustien found young women experimenting with possible identities in their video narratives. This demonstrates the importance of collecting the narratives of young people, as I have done in the *immrama* of this thesis, because they provide rich representations of how identities of adulthood are articulated. Anthropological scholars have generally defined *adulthood* as full-membership in a society after an event or ritual has transformed the adolescent or novice into an *adult* as recognised by others; for example, through the recognition of puberty or marriage in religious rites (Turner 1969; van Gennep 1960). As Kirkpatrick (2009) and Settersten (2011) have identified, however, increasingly these transitions are taking place in years, rather than months. This prolonged liminality directly impacts whether a young person considers themselves to be an *adult*, and this transition is inherently personal.

3.2.1 *Defining adult*

Over the past two centuries, the cultural characteristics used to define *adulthood* have varied significantly within Anglo-American societies. In some cases, *adulthood* has been delayed as new criteria have been introduced. This has resulted in increased ambiguity for adolescents as new avenues towards *adulthood* are developed, and in some instances more complex routes as well (Settersten 2011). In this way, the explicit age markers that determine rights and responsibilities for adults, such as voting, drinking, and military service, are now blurred by additional social expectations in American and Canadian societies such as advanced education, marriage, and parenthood. In his analysis of when young adults in the United States considered themselves to be *adult*, Settersten (2011) determined that while there are commonly held characteristics, there is no longer a unified, clear path or ritual to *adulthood*. Children and parents promote different characteristics based on individually desired goals. Indeed, Settersten (2011) found that parenthood was most often the event that transformed a young person into an *adult*, whether at 16 years of age or 30. The result is that transition periods between *childhood* and *adulthood* vary in length, depending on the life history, socio-cultural expectations, and experiential trajectories of each individual.

If parenthood is the defining characterisation of adulthood, study abroad experiences are necessarily limited to one experience amongst others in a further liminal period that contribute to, but do not define, a sense of *adulthood*. Indeed, while students discussed this period as liminal in nature, a time before responsibilities and obligations, they do not refer to this as a transition towards adulthood. Conceptualising this period in this manner, however, enabled me to explore how intercultural learning might contribute to the personal development that results in a sense of independence and self-reliance in the face of uncertainty. Aronson (2008) found similarly that young women considered themselves to be an adult either when becoming a parent or financially independent. It is this sense of independence that resonated with Rose because she wanted to know she could survive on her own before she got married (Section 4.1).

In a society where marriage and parenthood are being delayed by those who do not feel prepared for such adult responsibilities (Rindfuss *et al.* 1996), Settersten (2011) noted that education and employment are now becoming significant markers of the transition to *adulthood*. Aronson (2008) confirms that this is of great concern for middle-class women. Given the varied types of events, accomplishments, and challenges, each person considers themselves to have been an *adult* in different stages (and ages) of their lives. Incorporated into each of these markers is a sense of autonomy, where the person, as an *adult*, is capable of voting, drinking, graduating, marrying, and raising children by themselves. For Rose (Section 4.1) self-sufficiency was one characteristic she felt helped her along this transitional path. Given the overcoming of personal and academic difficulties in defining the point of entry into *adulthood*, studying abroad would seem to offer another opportunity to develop the autonomy and confidence that enables young adults to consider their personal transition to *adulthood* to be completed.

The transition towards adulthood is individualistic, and can only be truly assessed by individuals, on his or her own terms, within their social reality. In some cases, intercultural experiences might supplement that *rite of passage* into *adulthood* as conceived by van Gennep (1960).

3.2.2 Liminal adulthood

As I conducted my fieldwork, I became interested in the experiential reflections of students while undertaking their studies in a foreign place. It is my contention that an analysis of this liminal period in a student's life in which they wander between academic and cultural frames of reference will help to develop the ethnographic record in relation to secular transitions children make into *adulthood*. In particular, I draw upon van Gennep's (1960) theorisation of liminality in order to examine a particular period of time in which students have been separated from their families and cultural homes and have yet to return and be reincorporated into their home institutions, families, careers, and leisure activities. The *liminoid*, the individual post-separation and pre-reintegration, is on a threshold between the

two realities in which the ‘ritual subjects pass through a period and area of ambiguity, a sort of social limbo’ (Turner 1982: 24). Each of these phases may be characterised by rituals themselves, such as the ‘going away party’ and the ‘welcome home party’. Universities were identified as sites for such rituals by Turner who refers to ‘liminoid’ settings for all kinds of freewheeling, experiential cognitive behaviour as well as forms of symbolic activities, like ‘rushing’ and ‘pledging’ ceremonies in American college fraternities and society houses (Turner 1982: 33). Moffatt (1989) found similar results in his ethnography of university life in New Jersey, especially in the organisation of fraternities. This removal from normal social frameworks is intended to enable the initiate to reconsider their identities in relation to new expected social roles and responsibilities. While extreme, study abroad students are removed from their homes and families for a period of several weeks, months, or years. My informants did not relate this period with a sense of being in limbo in our interviews, however, but with a sense of enthusiasm for their activities abroad. Some, such as Rose (Section 4.1) viewed this time as the last time they could be themselves without adult responsibilities. Most ethnographers of ritual emphasise the importance of reincorporation into normal social structures (Grimes 1996). However, Kirkpatrick (2009) highlights the potential of liminal time, where boys spend time developing relationships without social responsibilities.

In this thesis, I specifically examine the time that students spend away from their homes and argue that the entire time spent wandering consists of a liminal period in which students experiment with new ideas, meet new people, and incorporate those experiences into developing identities that are constantly re-imagined in relation to an ever-increasing social worldview. These are the self-directed learning outcomes of intercultural and transformative learning theory. Similarly, this reflects the Irish conceptualisation of wandering within the *immrama* tradition and personal development through intercultural and transformative learning. In this case, wandering offered students a period of creative potential, to learn about themselves and who they want to become, before returning to their adult responsibilities as conceived of by Rose as ‘working until my 60s’ (Section 4.1) or Lin’s (Section 4.4) established business career. This liminality offered students an

opportunity to reconsider whom they are and what they want to become, free of familial and social pressures while being exposed to alternative ways of being.

By untethering young people from their academic and familial responsibilities for a period of international travel, students can rethink, explore, and reintegrate new experiences into their sense of an *adult* self. The potential to develop personally because of learning with others is tied to the idea of *bildung* (Section 1.2). By trying new things and meeting new people, students can begin to imagine a future self, a self they want to be, in relation to the expected *adult* responsibilities. For Turner, in post-industrial societies, these liminal periods become extended and it can take several years to transition to the next social step. This aptly incorporates the experience of international travel and the reintegration process upon their return as they begin to take on *adult* roles and responsibilities. Every society has its own institutions to facilitate this transition. In modern, Western societies, universities have become an institution that instructs young people on expected adult competences and attitudes (Durkheim 1956). In other cultures, rituals such as the American Amish *rumspringa* provides 16-year olds with extended periods for transgressing group norms away from the community serves to reinforce group ideals and expectations (Mazie 2005).

In the context of studying abroad, my informants' experiences of interactions with other cultures influenced whether the student adapted their national identities (Dolby 2004). For my informants, orientations towards professional identities were heightened during their period abroad. For example, Yeomi (Section 4.3) used her time in Galway to maximise her English-language practice for her career as a translator while Lin (Section 4.4) strove to establish business connections. Michael (Section 6.2) established friendship networks to facilitate a future as a professional musician in Europe. As Michael did not know traditional Irish music he found it difficult to meet and relate to local musicians, or to join into the jam sessions that are tourist attractions in and of themselves, such as reported in the small village of Doolin on the west coast by Kaul (2009). Others, such as Jennifer (Section 8.2) reconsidered their professional aspirations entirely after meeting new people, in this case a professor who inspired Jennifer to study ecogastronomy. The shifting perspectives of my informants in their orientation and outlook resulted through interactions

with people who did not share their frame of reference. This emphasises that each students' experience is unique, driven by their own interests and personalities. In each example, however, students are trying professional identities that they will incorporate into their adult lives.

3.2.3 Learning *adulthood*

Education has always been an influence on the transition an adolescent experiences before they become an adult within a society. For example, Kirkpatrick (2009) observed that *Marquesean* adolescent boys enter into a liminal period between leaving compulsory education institutions at the age of 14 and until they are recognised as an *adult* at 18 years of age when they can leave home for military service. During this period, where they are neither *child* nor *adult*, the boys begin to assert their independence, and undergo a ritual of supercision where a cut is made into the foreskin of the penis, a final bounded ritual marking *adulthood*. However, boys also begin to travel to new villages and meet new people during this period of liminality. As part of their travels, they establish 'road friends' from other villages with whom they maintain new kinship ties in adulthood through *hakahoa*, the ritual exchange of names (Kirkpatrick 2009: 392). Boys are no longer dependent on their families, nor have they established an independent household for themselves as adults. As a result of these new experiences, Kirkpatrick (2009: 395) notes that '[k]nowledge of the self as distinctive is recurrently heightened, disjunctures between self and social categories are felt deeply, and a view of self as seeking autonomy is embraced and given detailed content'. This period only begins after leaving formal educational training in French-language schools. These adolescents challenge conceptualisations of *adulthood* and follow multiple routes (ritual supercision, making friends, and military service) to possibly different versions of an *adult*. It is not their rite of passage that is paramount; rather, it is the period of transition when boys are liminoid, temporarily removed from socially-imposed norms that allow them a period of exploration and transformation. These experiences are emphasised before *adulthood* status can be conferred. Study abroad programmes offer students the potential to experience similarly deep opportunities to establish friendship networks. While most of my informants created

new friendship networks in Ireland, others travelled with extended family networks and fiancés, such as Michael (Section 6.2), and Henry and Irene (Section 7.2.1). None of these students followed the same path, and consequently they will not end at the same *adult* identity either. This experience is inherently unprogrammable from a curricular point of view, but travel offered the greatest potential for intercultural and transformative learning through touristic practices.

Anthropologists of education have similarly been concerned with the formation of *adults* through structured learning environments. Approaches include classroom instruction in moral education in India (Froerer 2007), specially themed curricula such as environmental responsibility in Costa Rica (Blum 2008), indigenous rights in Peru (García 2003), or education reform of racially segregated classrooms in South Africa (Brook 1996). Ethnographic studies of the American educational systems have focused, for example, on excluded ethnic communities (Cousins 1999; Cousins & Mabrey 1998) and elite schools (Horvat & Antonio 1999). By focusing on classrooms, hallways, and other spaces limited by the school building, these ethnographies do not engage with the seemingly limitless influences that exist outside those four walls. Students who studied abroad reported greater influences on their personal development away from the university campus (Chapter 7). It seems that friends created these opportunities. This form of ‘bonding social capital is found between individuals in tightly-knit, emotionally close relationships’ (Ellison *et al.* 2007: 1146). These relationships develop because of their isolation from family and friends at home and their shared exciting, lonely, and challenging study abroad experience. Some of my informants, such as Lin (Section 4.4), explicitly desired to create bonding social capital that can be used to find employment after graduation. For others such as Monika (Section 4.5), this was a more organic experience, meeting friends of friends at weekly gatherings with no external pressure of future aspirations. Together, they created new, shared experiences, reinforcing their budding friendship networks.

3.2.4 Learning friendship

Friendships are one of the key strategies students mobilise in order to successfully complete their self-transformation. These friends join the student on her journey of self-discovery as well as academic development, and together they have social encounters that serve to create serendipitous and self-directed opportunities for learning if they wish to do so. In a general sense, Pahl has suggested that women increasingly have opportunities to make friends as their participation in higher education has increased in recent years because ‘a growing proportion of young people in their early twenties who are in higher or further education also have the time and opportunity to make friends to match their emerging identities’ (2000: 171). Brooks, in her study of students as they prepare for university in the UK, demonstrates that they make strategic friendship choices both prior to and once they are attending higher education institutions. She found that ‘friendships are strengthened by the shared experience of living away from home for the first time and facing problems together’ (Brooks 2002: 461). This experience was common to all of her informants, both foreign and domestic. She concluded they became ‘more confident about their own identity’ (Brooks 2007: 698) because of these friendships in a similar fashion to Kirkpatrick’s *Marquesean* youth. She goes on to note that ‘many of the students thought that they had learnt more about themselves, other cultures and the world generally, by studying and, in most cases, living, alongside others from very different backgrounds’ (Brooks 2007: 698). These are the transformative results to be expected from intercultural learning through educational tourism.

Regardless of the existence and constitution of learning space, peers, peer pressures, and social enmities are also sources of learning in ethnographies of education (Hey 1997). Spontaneous friendships, age cohorts, co-national members, and media socialisation have all been researched because they have tremendous impact on how children and young adults are incorporated and tolerated in familial and larger communities, and on the social roles that are expected of them (Brown 2009a; 2009b; Kehler 2007; Kehily *et al.* 2002). As they become adults, adolescents must also learn how to balance family, employment, and social obligations in their daily lives while still exploring the world around them and

cultivating their new, independent identities. For some of my informants, their semester abroad offered them an opportunity to put off those responsibilities and obligations, at least for a little while. While Rose was explicit about this (Section 4.1), Elizabeth was also using continued postgraduate education to postpone entering the workforce (Section 8.4). In overcoming daily challenges in a new place, these students learned how they might like to live in the future and how they wished to interact with the world around them as an adult.

At the same time, there are many hidden curricula (Margolis 2001) within North American higher education that can similarly influence the development of young women. One orients female students away from higher education and places importance on their lives at home (Orenstein 1994). Another posits that young women have the chance to change their self-perception in relation to ability, confidence, and professional aspirations. For example, Holland and Eisenhart (1992) discovered that some female university students changed, and often lowered, their career goals and aspirational identities as scientists or engineers in favour of romantic relationships and marriage opportunities when they entered post-secondary education in order to conform to expected gendered roles that they had learned in childhood. Universities, then, become sites in which students learn and practice what is expected of them socially, locate acceptable marriage partners in order to fulfil these obligations, and enter into romantic relationships with them, thereby reinforcing traditional cultural practices and expectations in relation to gendered identities.

Within the context of international education explicitly, Furnham and Alibhai (1985) identified three social networking strategies for students studying in a foreign country: a primary mono-cultural network; a secondary bi-cultural network; and a third, multi-cultural network. A mono-cultural network is one in which close friendships are established with students who share ethnic, national, or linguistic characteristics. These networks share common cultural expressions and expected behaviours. Bi-cultural networks are created between the student and host nationals who are significant to them, especially academics, fellow students, and institutional officials. Furnham and Alibhai suggest that this type of network facilitates the student's academic and professional aspirations while abroad. Finally, multi-cultural networks are created through general social

interactions for recreational activities. This conceptual framework was created after analysing the results of their study of 165 foreign students in London. They asked students to report the nationality of their three best friends in London, and the results of the North American students fit their schemata: 49% of their best friends were also from North America, followed by 21% from the UK and 15% European. While I did not ask this specific question from my informants, it does seem that they were predominantly friends with co-nationals in the first instance, and other international students in the second. Their friendship networks were not exclusively with co-nationals, however, so they did have opportunities for intercultural learning that might influence the kind of adult they would like to become.

3.3 Educationalist theories of adult learning

The transition from child, through adolescence, towards adulthood has been represented in educationalist material as requiring tailored and specialised pedagogical techniques based on the presumed learning capabilities of an individual (Taylor 2007). While child learning had been a concern for early theorists of learning, little differentiation was made relating to the outcomes of adult learning as potentially dissimilar from those techniques in childhood when the idea of *bildung* (Section 1.2) was articulated (Simao 2005). Beginning in the 1960s, two theories that specifically addressed the particularities of adult learning practices were developed: andragogy and self-directed learning. Knowles proposed andragogy to be ‘the art and science of helping adults learn’ (1980: 43). Andragogical theory presumed that adult learning was characterised by five distinct differences from the learning experienced by children:

- that as the adult gains experience they begin to independently direct their own learning;
- that this experience is derived from the richness of life experience inside and outside of the classroom;
- that these experiences are shaped by social roles and developmental expectations;
- that the context of adult learning is influenced by practical and immediate needs, when learning is immediately put into practice; and

- that internal desire and personal needs motivate adults to learn continuously. (Merriam 2001: 5)

In the 1960s, two theories that specifically addressed the particularities of adult learning practices were developed. Knowles (1980: 43) presumed that adult learning was distinctly different from the learning experienced by children in that it was independently directed and based on need and experience. Merriam, Mott and Lee (1996) criticised andragogical theory as lacking a sufficient theoretical foundation, failing to provide a system of best practices, or merely identifying an ideal student and obscuring negative experiences of both men and women involved in learning activities. Grace (1996: 383) criticised the theory for a lack of acknowledgement of the social and cultural influences impacting an individual, both their positive and negative personal histories, and how each individual learns differently.

These criticisms have had a direct impact on the development and assessment of intercultural learning through educational tourism. Study abroad literature, for the most part, emphasises positive experiences where each student will have a unique experience while studying abroad, and with reflection may incorporate those experiences into developing conceptualisations of the self. Indeed, study abroad studies generally focus on cohorts of ideal students (Crawshaw *et al.* 2010) and ideal outcomes. Shupe (2007) and Brown (2008) have noted negative outcomes, however. It is for this reason I have included the positive and negative personal narratives of my informants to showcase their varied experiences as they became adults through international education opportunities.

Andragogy as a field and method of adult education in Eastern Europe has flourished since the 19th century. It was originally conceived by Alexander Kapp to have ‘included and combined the education of inner subjective personality (“character”) and outer, objective competencies’ (Henschke 2006: xv). More recently, the theory has come to include lifelong learning and professional programmes that are delivered in a higher education context (Savicevic 1998: 116, in Merriam 2001: 7). In anthropological circles, it is the experiences of fieldwork itself that supersedes the importance of a chosen site; each new place must, by necessity, offer different experiences. Each adult, with their unique set

of experiences, would have their own, personalised reactions to each new site. The individuality of response is reflected in my survey data where some students reported no change in their self-confidence while others reported a significant increase (Section 5.5). It seems implausible, therefore, that all educational settings present the same outcomes for potential learning or the same outcomes for assessment.

3.3.1 Teacher-centred learning

Teacher-centred learning within andragogical theory, however, assumes that while ‘a dependent learner needs more introductory materials and appreciates lectures, drills, and immediate correction, a self-directed learner can engage in independent projects, student-directed discussion, and discovery learning’ (Merriam 2001: 10). The educational institution develops formalised methods, such as the lecture but also including seminars, laboratories, group work, and exam revision, in order to guide student learning and generate modes and methods of assessment that are applied equally to all students just as Lewis and Niesenbaum (2005) did in Costa Rica. Contemporary theorists have challenged the exclusivity of this pathway to learning by suggesting that adult students increase their learning outcomes within a self-directed model of learning. Marvell, Simm, Schaaf, and Harper (2013) have been including student-led learning in their geography field schools, where each year students travel to Barcelona. The students each have the responsibility to engage with peers and to become informed about a local attraction, managing transportation, information, and access to the sites as well as the curricular content of their 3-hour presentation. They found that by organising the trips in this fashion, students developed a deeper relationship with their assigned attraction and were excited to share their experiences with the other students in the class. Monika (Section 4.5) reflects this form of engagement because she offered to become a tour guide to her new friends. She aimed to present a part of Europe that is important for her, as this is the region she is from, and her enthusiasm had motivated her Mediterranean friends to join her at home for a similar tour to the ones organised by Marvell *et al.* My informants were spontaneously developing this form of learning activity, along the lines of educational tourism. This form

of activity is often excluded from the intercultural learning studies I have discussed in this thesis, and this activity requires further academic attention.

Students develop greater intercultural competences from their own, independent learning opportunities than in formal classrooms. This was reflected in my interviews, where informants reported lax academic standards, such as the lack of required coursework and class attendance (Natalie, Section 8.6) or when even professors missed required class time (Michael, Section 6.2). This perceived lax academic environment did not prevent Natalie and Michael from becoming independent learners, however, because they reported learning a great deal as they travelled extensively with family and friends. This would seem to confirm that adults learn more from a self-directed model of learning. If this is the case, the importance of the university in facilitating mobility itself becomes more important than the content of the academic courses they offer.

3.3.2 Self-directed learning

Educational researchers have begun to examine self-directed learning specifically as the marker of adult learning. How this self-directed learning was to be defined, however, varies amongst theorists, for example: '[t]hose grounded in a humanistic philosophy posit that self-directed learning should have as its goal the development of the learner's capacity to be self-directed' (Merriam 2001: 9). Based on this foundation, self-directed learning has been hypothesised to possess potentially transformative learning possibilities (Mezirow 1978). If self-directed learning is the cornerstone of adult learning, and university students are in the process of becoming adults, this would suggest that university pedagogies are self-directed and independent in nature. This is not the case, as study abroad students are required to attend lectures and seminars as passive listeners in order to obtain their transfer credits, just as local students are. As I established in the previous section, however, my informants' intercultural learning was most influenced by self-directed travel with self-selected companions. This reinforces the university's role as a site of administration, curricular content, and facilitator of cross-border migration. Indeed, it would seem that the primary site of self-directed adult learning is within the individual.

Once self-directed adult learning outside the classroom became recognised as a possible site for learning, Daloz (1988: 236) suggested that '[when] travellers leave home, they risk discovering a terrible secret: theirs is only one of any number of tribes, each believing its own truth to be paramount'. The outcome of such exploration, however, is by no means certain, nor necessarily positive. Drawing on travel narratives from cultural heroic tales, Daloz emphasises that the challenges, failures and triumphs in a foreign place are unimaginable, and might result in any number of personal learning outcomes. Whether conscious or not, wanderers 'sought something far more precious than conventional happiness' (Daloz 1988: 239). Milstein (2005) found that the alumni of the Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme reported increased self-efficacy while Brown's (2009a) international students in the UK experienced improved cross-cultural communication skills. One could argue that these outcomes might make the student happy in the conventional sense. Daloz is correct in determining that the experiences need not necessarily be positive in outcome (Shupe 2007; Brown 2008). Rather, the process of self-directed wandering was influenced by those friends the student met along their journey. That journey offered a site for learning, as in the example I am creating in this thesis when a students' friendship network framed and accompanied my informants wandering. In this sense, universities provide adults with a setting to begin their journey, but the journey necessarily ends elsewhere. The journey is inherently personal in nature, and offers the student an opportunity to experience transformative learning.

3.3.3 Transformative learning

As a theoretical foundation for critical analysis, transformative learning is based upon the idea that learning through experience provides an adult learner the opportunity to expand their horizons and transform their conception of themselves, as well as their relationships with the world around them. All learning can result in change, but as a form of transformative learning, it is the perception of change that is important.

As a form of learning for adults, transformative learning results from the incorporation and internalisation of new experiences, concepts, information, and feelings into the frame of reference that an individual has developed through their childhood learning. In conceptualising transformative learning theory, Mezirow (1997: 5, emphasis in original) has hypothesised that *transformative learning* ‘is the process of effecting change in a *frame of reference*’. Intercultural learning similarly understands students to have established cultural frames of reference that must be adapted based on new experiences meeting people who do not necessarily share those references and trying new things. Mezirow (1997: 5) defined a frame of reference as ‘the structure of assumptions through which we understand our experiences. They selectively shape and delimit expectations, perceptions, cognition, and feelings’. Adult learners become more aware of their own assumptions and judgements, and develop better problem solving skills to recognise and assess alternative frames of reference (Mezirow 1997: 9). These outcomes in transformative learning theory are fundamentally similar to those in intercultural learning socio-cultural and social competences because Byram (1997) suggests that intercultural learners should be able to understand social and cultural frames and references. This suggests that while linguistic abilities may increase a student’s transformative learning potential, it is in understanding, and adapting, to new frames of reference that offers greater potential for personal development. This may be a reason why my informants, who already shared a common language with their local hosts, still needed to develop friendship networks in order to achieve these forms of learning while studying abroad.

Throughout this learning process, it is assumed that educational opportunities inherently provide opportunities for personal transformation. Cranton (1994: 160) notes that all forms of education offer students opportunities to experience ‘changes in the amount of knowledge people have, changes in skills and competences, changes in the way we communicate and understand each other, changes in our sense of self, and changes in our social world’. Studying abroad is a relatively new case under consideration for transformative learning theorists (Dirkx *et al.* 2009; Ritz 2009). However, the parallels between intercultural and transformative learning are profound. This suggests that it is not necessary to travel abroad to develop these skills in communication or competences in

understanding the social world. Intercultural learning theorists might argue that studying abroad facilitates this more quickly due to the shock and adaptation necessary when travelling abroad. As Roberts, Byram, Barro, Jordan, and Street (2001) point out, however, this can result ‘at home’ as well.

Grabove (1997: 90) suggests that such transformations are fundamentally individual, however, and the role of the formal educational instructor is limited in this sense because it is the learning that experiences provide, and critical reflection upon these experiences, that are the foundation of transformative learning. As a result, students become self-directed learners, responsible for their learning opportunities. International travel provides an opportunity for students to become self-directed and reflect on their experiences to learn from them. This reinforces the idea that university lecture theatres are not the site of transformative learning, and casts the institution as a sponsor of opportunities for extended travel. This is, ultimately, why Yeomi (Section 4.3) chose to study in Galway, for example. Increasingly, marketing materials are taking this into account, focusing just as much on local attractions as on academic standards (Mazzarol 1998).

3.3.4 Higher education settings

In traditional higher education contexts, adults continue to learn via internalised memorisation, where new ideas might challenge their frame of reference, but from a experiential context of classroom-based lecturing, lab work, and seminar participation as part of a Durkheimian (1956) transmission of cultures of modern democracy and industrial values. In this sense, universities aim ‘to inculcate the skills, subjectivities, and disciplines that undergird the modern nation-state’ (Levinson & Holland 1996: 1). Such traditional teaching arenas do not foster transformative learning because the student, once incorporated into the university’s *culture*, does not experience any further tribal contradictions as envisaged by Daloz (1988). Cooley’s (2007) study of women’s enclaves challenges this assumption through the application of Third Wave Feminism to women’s participation in learning communities. In their self-organising enclave, women educated to the university level challenge social ideas of gender, power, globalisation, and technological

development. This is a self-selecting group of women who explored topics intellectually; in much the same way my informants also established self-selected travelling groups to explore new cultural frames of references. These women experienced transformative learning and the opportunity to imagine different ways of being socially in the world. While the women's enclave imagined those possibilities, my informants moved between different frames of reference with different expectations of young women, their freedom of movement, their attire, and their possible professional aspirations.

International education, however, is an example of higher education programmes that create new culturally constructed learning environments because students are moving between culturally-constructed institutions. They employ new educational approaches towards higher education by creating a continuous learning environment based on culturally-derived pedagogical philosophies where students must also learn new social norms, cultural characterisations, and social organisations that challenge the student's established frames of reference. Other types of transformative learning programmes include volunteerism (Sin 2009), internships and training (Borri *et al.* 2007), and forms of experiential learning that push the student to think in new ways based on personal experiences of real problems (Bentley 1998). Regardless of the structural form of the programme, however, the student, as a self-directed learner, drives their access to, engagement with, alternative frames of reference.

International wandering provides an optimal setting in which to understand transformative learning because by experiencing different cultural frames of reference through self-directed learning, the students must confront new and disorienting ideas and integrate these into a new understanding of themselves. By changing their entire personal and academic environment, and experiencing a sense of disequilibrium in a new cultural and linguistic environment, students integrate and synthesise new learning experiences into their frame of reference directly because of their wandering. Boyd (1989: 459) suggests transformative learning to be 'a fundamental change in one's personality involving conjointly the resolution of a personal dilemma and the expansion of consciousness resulting in greater personal integration'. Such experiences can occur both in the classroom

and in the field, but seem to be the most effective if developed independently by the student. Each student might experience the same international context differently, however, because studying abroad is not a homogenous activity. As students move between the classroom and the social world that surrounds them, each day offers new challenges that may confirm or confront perceptions of the self, and the predictability of outcomes from these interactions. Transformative learning theory highlights that students do not necessarily need to travel to a foreign country to have this experience. This is because the desired outcome of transformative learning for the student is to become ‘a more autonomous thinker by learning to negotiate his or her own values, meanings, and purposes rather than to uncritically act on those of others’ (Mezirow 1997: 11).

3.4 *Developing intercultural competences*

Intercultural learning theorists have tended to focus on second language acquisition and development as a key outcome of studying abroad (Byram & Feng 2006; Phipps & Gonzalez 2004). As I will demonstrate in this thesis, however, it would seem that linguistic challenges are not the only mechanism to foster intercultural learning and personal development. Researchers have been examining the nature and impact of study abroad experiences on students for over fifty years (Gullahorn & Gullahorn 1966; Woitsch 2011). In the section that follows, I will discuss the development of *intercultural* as a theoretical concept to better understand how studying abroad can affect transitions to *adulthood*.

Supporters of study abroad initiatives often emphasise the economic and employment benefits of international education. For example, Mohajeri Norris and Gillespie (2009) examined how studying abroad shapes global careers, and identified that studying abroad, learning a language, and participating in international internships all correlated strongly with the student establishing an international career. Through their experiences, students are imagined by researchers to develop global knowledge, attitudes, empathy, and skills that will aid the student to work with others in the future (Coleman 2001). The characteristics of teamwork, communication skills, and collaboration emphasise useful skills for the labour market rather than personal development. Coleman (British

Academy 2012: 7) found that 35% of respondents (the largest group) identified personal development as their principle or desired learning outcome from their year abroad. They reported that they ‘gained most in personal terms’, but what these personal gains might be is not discussed. In this section, I will examine how intercultural learning opportunities are being assessed. I then explore the nature of intercultural competences that are expected to develop because of studying abroad, the settings that provide opportunities for this development, and the student identities that arise from study abroad experiences.

3.4.1 Student self-reporting of personal learning

Previous case studies examining the development of self-confidence because of studying abroad have generated conflicting conclusions in relation to the nature and degree of change in perceived self-confidence amongst American international students. Many single cohort, single programme, and institutional studies are available that analyse some particular facet of study abroad opportunities for students, adopting a variety of theoretical and pedagogical points of view (see for example Dirkx *et al.* 2009; Moinette 2005; Ritz 2009). Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1966), an early study, is still relevant to my thesis as it was both extensive and one of the first analyses to specifically address the question of gender in the outcomes of study abroad programmes. Nash’s (1976) findings contradict Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1966) in analysing the psychological impact of study abroad experiences in a small cohort of students, but the discontinuity in results is important for highlighting the effects of studying abroad.

In their study, Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1966) conducted a survey of 400 American students on study abroad programmes in France and compared their results to a survey of 5,000 Fulbright and Smith-Mundt grant recipients who studied in France between 1947 and 1957. For the purposes of their study, the intended learning outcomes of study abroad experiences were the promotion of international understanding, the promotion of the United States and American culture amongst friends and supporters, economic and political development of other countries, the educational development of outstanding individuals

who might make a contribution to American society, and the advancement of knowledge. These goals tended to focus on the incorporation and training of international students on American campuses who would then travel the world and take with them the knowledge they learned to effect positive change, thereby promoting the American worldview.

While these were the intended outcomes of the Fulbright programme, general study abroad outcomes expected in the 21st century are more consistent with the development of intercultural competences. While students are still expected to develop greater appreciation for their own culture, American culture is no longer considered the apex of social development. In particular, socio-cultural competences are developed when a student can understand and adapt to different, equally valuable frames of reference, and make their own judgements about them. Dolby's studies (2004; 2007) confirm this new outcome when American students must come to terms with how Americans are perceived in other countries as a result of 'The War on Terror'. My informants were on a different trajectory, of valuing Irish culture and ancestry, however. Natalie's (Section 8.6) grandparents had been Irish, and she was keen to develop a greater appreciation of Irish identity rather than reinforce her sense of American identity. There is consistency with my own study of heritage tourists (Nielsen 2010) and the findings of Comp (2008) who studied American students in Western Europe more generally, where students are travelling to Europe as part of study abroad initiatives in order to reconnect with family connections. These students tend to identify with a national diaspora community in the US, and hope to associate with them while abroad. This may reflect a popular shift in the perceived hegemony of American superiority, or an increase in interest in cultural heritage.

Once the 5,400 survey responses were collected and coded, Gullahorn and Gullahorn performed multiple regression and cluster analyses to answer their research questions and to ascertain if any variables that they had not anticipated had significant impacts on areas of interest. This quantitative data, rather than their interviews, was the foundation of their analysis in order to avoid their perceived unreliability of interview data. This is the opposite of my approach in this thesis, in which I have used the personal narratives of my informants derived through interviews to collect pertinent data because

interviews elicited student reflection on how they felt about their learning through experiences. The students would create their own ‘taxonomy of outcomes’ in a similar fashion to Kuh’s (1993) study of out-of-class learning amongst American students, rather than reflecting solely a predefined category established by Gullahorn and Gullahorn in their survey instrument. In adding qualitative data, my study complements the Gullahorn and Gullahorn findings, that student demographics and friendship networks directly affect a student’s ability to foster their own intercultural development.

Gullahorn and Gullahorn found that student demographics played a significant role in student responses to each area of inquiry. All students had the opportunity to meet host nationals and develop relationships with them. They were also able to have casual interactions, meet with other international students, or even to visit host nationals in their homes. Every student I interviewed lived with other people (many of whom were local Irish residents) and participated in social clubs, often organised specifically for international students. These experiences, however, did not always result in positive interrelations with local students. For example, Elizabeth (Section 8.4) considered herself to be living with ‘filthy and immature Irish boys’. Her experience did not increase Elizabeth’s appreciation of Irish culture; rather it served to focus her energies on establishing friendships with other international students. Natalie (Section 8.6) reported a sense of segregation from the local academic community when she comments that if she did not attend her classes, ‘no one would have noticed’. While Natalie enjoyed interacting with her professors, she did not make friends with her classmates. Casual interactions with local students, therefore, seemed to separate my informants from their Irish hosts and reinforce the ‘international bubble’ phenomenon.

The more academically demanding their studies were, the less these casual social interactions seem to have occurred for Gullahorn and Gullahorn’s respondents. These relationships, both during and after their studies, served to enable public presentations of their experiences and develop international networks in which foreign students might be attracted to the US for their studies. The expectation that American students would make presentations in their host communities about American topics is no longer incorporated into general study abroad programmes. Instead, students such as Yeomi (Section 4.3), a

Mexican student, and Elizabeth (Section 8.4), an American student, were required to make presentations or write reports upon their return for their home communities. No Canadian students reported this requirement. This shift reflects the greater modification towards the personal development of the student and fostering intercultural competences rather than the promotion of American society abroad that had been the central concern of the Fulbright programme during The Cold War.

Gullahorn and Gullahorn also determined that programme status influenced student success in developing and maintaining relationships during and after their sojourn, as the researchers found that students who studied the arts and humanities received positive benefits during their time in Europe because of European universities' perceived excellence in establishing international relationships. Natural science students, however, did not experience the same result upon their return to the United States owing to the perceived superiority of American science departments and laboratories. With the establishment of the 'Celtic Tiger' economy in Ireland (Wickham & Boucher 2004), and the higher education institutions emphasis on engineering and technological development, Ireland presents an alternative economic success model to that envisioned in the Gullahorn and Gullahorn study. While it is still easier for humanities and social science students to transfer credits from Irish universities, Ireland also attracts those engineering students who go abroad because of growing reputations in the fields of engineering (Kerins *et al.* 2008), research and development (Storey & Tether 1998), and medicine (Bourke 1997). This is reflected in a European student from my fieldwork who returned home after only two weeks because the specialised piece of equipment he required to complete his thesis was broken, and would not be repaired in time. The use of this piece of equipment was his sole reason for travelling to Limerick, and without access he no longer saw any purpose in staying. European music programmes were also highly regarded by Michael (Section 6.2), who chose to study in Europe rather than North America to access what he considered a more robust academic programme. While he was ultimately disappointed with his programme in Ireland, he intended to go to continental Europe to make up for the deficiency. The perceived superiority of American programmes in the Gullahorn and

Gullahorn study is no longer the case; there are many possible destinations in a globalised higher education market.

In the 1960s, Gullahorn and Gullahorn noted that older, married, male students conducting research for an advanced degree, and who were highly proficient in the local language, tended to have the least contact with host nationals despite their interest in local topics and language facility. Younger, unmarried, female students from non-prestigious universities with deficient linguistic skills, however, developed more relationships, and through them gained insight into themselves, and what kinds of careers they might wish to pursue. This led Gullahorn and Gullahorn to surmise ‘that a majority of the students [...] regarded the overseas experiences as a means of developing personal maturity and perspective – a step toward resolving uncertainty and conflicts concerning their identity’ (1966: 54). These findings are consistent for my informants as well. Postgraduate students, such as Michael (Section 6.2), were unable to establish as extensive friendship networks as their undergraduate counterparts. Michael’s colleagues and professors did not live in Ireland, but rather commuted to the campus solely for the purpose of attending lectures. In contrast, Teresa (Section 6.5) established a substantial friendship network with local and international students with whom she shared cooking and travel experiences. Indeed, Elizabeth (Section 8.4) reported that her semester abroad ‘had changed her a lot’ in the sense that she now had a clearer idea of what she wanted to do in the future and the confidence to know she could accomplish those aspirations on her own as a result of her experiences in Ireland with her new friends. I am hesitant to confirm that these are gendered responses to studying abroad as I was significantly challenged to include interviews with men during my fieldwork. My findings are consistent, however, in that postgraduate students with a deeper interest in local culture are more isolated than undergraduate students who are more open to meeting people and trying new things. These conclusions reflected my findings that women were still experiencing a greater sense of personal development because of studying abroad half a century later.

The Gullahorn and Gullahorn project (1966) was funded by the Fulbright programme and the Department of State (US) in order to ascertain the outcomes of study

abroad policies. This was one of the first comprehensive studies interested in such a process. Their study suffered from funder bias in that the subjects, questions, and concerns of the study's were influenced by external sources with an interest in the study findings and conclusions. Other comparative programmes could have been incorporated and were not. The statistical significance of this study is not reported, leaving readers unsure of the percentage these 400 students comprised of larger student migrations. Similarly, one can question the comparison of young students with general interests in cultural exploration with postgraduate and faculty interests in developing particular career trajectories and professional relationships. Further comparisons of the datasets would have elicited many other facets of potential experiences. In spite of the criticism, the Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1966) study contributes to the research landscape of this thesis in two concrete ways: first, it offers a glimpse into early data regarding female experiences of study abroad programmes; and second, the study highlights a continual seeking on the part of students towards deeper relationships with their faculty, and their subjects.

In the intervening years, other single studies of specific programmes have been conducted that assess the success or failure of the programme solely on whether the number of participants has increased and whether exit surveys at the end of the programme reflected positive statements by the students themselves (McLeod & Wainwright 2009). Others examine the utility of such programmes towards developing global careers (Mohajeri Norris & Gillespie 2009), and the development of linguistic competences (Freed 1998). However, as McLeod and Wainwright (2009) have demonstrated, students have both positive and negative experiences of studying abroad. In their study of American students in Scotland and France, they found that students suffered from unexpected experiences that they found to be stressful. When these students successfully overcame these experiences they reported increased self-confidence, with strengthened perceptions of themselves and of the world around them (McLeod & Wainwright 2009: 68). This is consistent with the *immram* of Rose (Section 4.1), whose increased sense of self-confidence arose from completing all of her medical follow-ups relating to her dislocated shoulder by herself. Very few studies have focused on overcoming adversity in study abroad experiences, and this is a concern for future research.

My findings were opposite to other studies, such as that of Nash (1976), who found that self-confidence did not increase as a result of studying abroad, and in fact decreased. He conducted a year-long examination of 41 out of a possible 47 students from the University of North Carolina who spent an academic year in France, and compared the results of a psychological questionnaire with those of a control group of 32 students who remained at the US campus for the same junior-year. All students participated in the study voluntarily. The study was funded by the University of Connecticut Research Foundation and the Camargo Foundation. Nash aimed to test whether study abroad experiences truly produce modern, confident, and liberal-minded adults, as was the common claim for the learning outcomes of study abroad programmes at the time. The study was particularly interested in ‘various kinds of personal development such as self-understanding, personal growth, increased tolerance, independence, sophistication, and greater openness or receptivity’ (Nash 1976: 192).

In order to test these assertions, Nash conducted a series of four surveys that were given to all students at the same time. The sequence of testing coincided with specific events in the overseas programmes that did not affect the home students. Nash does not identify at what exact stage in the academic year each of these tests were conducted, however. The major, initial questionnaire was given to students before their departure for France. Further questionnaires were deployed during their six-week orientation in Paris, while another was conducted at the end of the students’ time spent in Rouen where they participated in language programmes at a local university that were specially arranged for the students, and where they lived with French families. A final questionnaire was used at the end of the summer, after students had returned to the United States and had time to readjust. There was significant attrition at this stage from participation in the study.

The data collected was examined using t-testing in order to confirm the confidence of his results. However, Nash noted that because several investigators were used in this study, the use of different definitions of personality terminology may have affected the coding and assessment phases of the project. In contrast to his own investigators, Nash

suggested that not all students can be expected to change because of their experiences abroad, and this difference may have affected how each survey was coded. This issue did not affect my research, as I was the only coder of my interviews. In collaboration with colleagues, researchers have to keep this in mind and agree on definitions of terms and consistency in coding as they gather data in order to compare their results.

Nash set out to test five hypotheses with the collected data. The hypotheses included: that students should develop greater autonomy in new environments; that students should experience an expansion or differentiation of their *Self*; that students should develop increased tolerance and flexibility in new situations; that students should develop increased self-awareness and confidence; and finally that students should develop increased objectivity. Of importance to my discussion here, Nash found all of these hypotheses to either be false or was unable to prove or disprove the hypothesis. Nash's conclusions are inconsistent with my own. As my informants became more comfortable with student-led learning, their sense of autonomy increased, as in the case of Michael (Section 6.2), who took responsibility for developing his music career after he felt his academic programme was insufficient for the task. Rose (Section 4.1) was testing herself on whether she was capable of being successful without the support of friends and family, creating an opportunity to expand her sense of *Self*. Monika (Section 4.5) was the only student I interviewed who appreciated Limerick City, and adapted to its 'spontaneity' while being tolerant in accepting its 'dodgy' nature. Elizabeth (Section 8.4) was now confident she could survive on her own in any career. While none of my respondents reported a sense of objectivity developing as a result of studying abroad, this finding is reflected in the study conducted by Dolby (2004) that contradict Nash's conclusions and suggest that each student will have their own outcomes from studying abroad, where, for example, outcomes of confidence might increase, while objectivity and tolerance decrease. It is difficult to generalise, as a result.

In contrast to my findings, Nash rejected the hypothesis that international students experience increases in self-confidence, popular amongst international educators such as Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1966). He found that by using the Rosenberg Self-Evaluation

Scale to examine personal development, ‘the scores of the overseas group, as compared with the groups at home, *declined* significantly ($p < .06$) during the year’ (Nash 1976: 199, emphasis in original). The difficulty in accepting Nash’s conclusion ‘that self-confidence tends to decline as a result of a year abroad’ (1976: 199) is that uncertainty in self-reporting does not necessarily mean that there has been a decline in overall self-confidence. Nash suggested that this decline may be the result of homesickness where overseas students left significant relationships to participate in the programme. Some may have returned and not been able to re-enter those relationships, causing potential nervousness and uncertainty that may be reflected in their survey responses. However, it could also represent a period of transformation for students, who are in the process of reconceptualising themselves as an *adult* and are still uncomfortable with that identity.

In-depth interviews would have been required to ascertain if this was the case. Self-confidence is inherently a reflexive perception on the part of the student as to their competences in uncertain situations. Nash admitted that his study cannot be used to ascertain the typical experiences of American students, nor how various programmes might impact that experience. Instead, he suggested that his results should only be taken as suggestions and should not be used to create generalisations of the study abroad experience because insufficient data are available from post-sojourn students to assess his hypothesis. I argue that because this uncertainty is reflected in Nash’s results, it necessitates a study that balances quantitative and qualitative research tools to understand the development of confidence amongst internationally mobile students. These uncertainties pervade studies in the intervening period and I hope to bridge this ambiguity in my thesis through the creation of *immrama* to flesh out ideas of autonomy, the *Self*, tolerance, flexibility, confidence, and objectivity.

3.4.2 Assessing the intercultural

The primary focus of British intercultural learning research has been in developing assessment tools for study abroad programmes. Assessing intercultural learning has continued to be difficult for researchers, however. The ‘Interculture Project’

(<http://www.lancs.ac.uk/users/interculture/learn4.htm>) was conducted from 1997-2000 to examine intercultural learning amongst British students. The aim of the project was to understand the obstacles that prevent students from increasing intercultural learning while abroad and develop means to better support British students in France, Germany, Italy, and Spain in the future. Researchers first identified examples of positive intercultural experiences by collecting student accounts, evaluating the guidance teachers are given to foster these experiences, and developing instruments that can assess whether these experiences are increasing intercultural competence amongst students. Their intention was to disseminate examples of effective practices throughout the UK.

Student experiences were analysed on the basis of reflections written in their diaries (Crawshaw *et al.* 2001). Researchers were eager to assess the potential of student diaries as possible tools to assess student learning and develop intercultural learning in study abroad opportunities. They were also interested in how students presented themselves and projected identities that were impacted by intercultural learning. Crawshaw, Callen, and Tusting (2001) were concerned with developing effective tools to assess intercultural learning. Self-narration in reflective diaries proved to be one form of assessment that educators could read to examine how the student felt that they were developing because of their period of studying abroad. This focus on reflection through self-narration could also be noted during my interviews and in my survey responses. The interviews allowed students another opportunity to reflect on and narrate a story about their experiences relating to local Irish people and other international students. In creating individual *immrama* for each student I interviewed, I hope that I have created a text similar to what my informants might have created had they been asked to complete student diaries. I am recreating their voices, however, and have tried to represent their reflections with as little analysis as possible in order to retain their voice. I acknowledge, however, that I am in a greater position of authority because I am the one recounting their stories, rather than themselves. I hope that by complementing their narratives with my own, similar experiences I am better able to articulate the reflections they might have created in their own diaries. The students I interviewed were not required to complete this form of assessment as part of their own studies, but some were asked to give a public presentation

about their experiences upon their return (Yeomi, Section 4.3) or to write a critique (Elizabeth, Section 8.4). Regardless of the form, this narrative expression takes, reflecting on and representing intercultural experiences are fundamental to assessing intercultural learning because through reflexivity, the student can represent their own identity in relation to those experiences, and the type of person they see themselves becoming in the future. It is this form of personal development that I will return to in Chapter 7.

A second project relevant to my discussion here was ‘The Pragmatics and Intercultural Communication Project’ (<http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/projects/pic/index.htm>), 2003-2006, which followed the Interculture Project by examining the issues facing teaching assistants in England and France. PIC was principally interested in the examining the factors that impact intercultural learning, namely: ‘cultural, linguistic, institutional, political, and personal’ (Crawshaw *et al.* 2010: 76). Researchers interviewed 57 students (24 French and 33 English) from eight universities in order to examine their experiences as teacher trainees in foreign-language classrooms. While the focus of this project was not centred upon forms of assessment, researchers also collected logbooks and retrospective reports completed by the trainees. Crawshaw, Culpeper, and Harrison (2010) determined that students took advantage of this reflective project when they recounted periods of abstraction, concreteness, agency, personalisation, and intensity in how the teacher trainees mediated conflicts with their mentors. Such reflexivity might have been due to their participatory requirements where students were selected who were agreeable, conscientious, emotionally stable, open, and extroverted in nature. Even amongst my shy and introverted informants, such as Rose (Section 4.1), I found that the interview space offered my informants a similar opportunity to reflect on their learning and development in a narrative form.

3.4.3 Defining intercultural competences

Different forms of learning are often assessed through different mechanisms in higher education. While students are required to register and complete the assessments for courses, I will identify in this thesis that intercultural learning tends to result outside of the formal

educational context. Byram (1997: 10) suggests six competences that can be evaluated in the context of intercultural learning:

- Linguistic competence: the ability a student develops to understand, interpret, and replicate verbal and gestural languages;
- Sociolinguistic competence: understanding the appropriate social context of verbal communication based on different settings or relationships;
- Discourse competence: the ability to develop appropriate strategies to analyse textual communications;
- Strategic competence: the ability to ensure that the student is being understood by others such as rephrasing, seeking clarification;
- Socio-cultural competence: understanding applicable social and cultural frames of reference;
- Social competence: the development of skills to facilitate interactions with others, including motivations to do so, positive attitudes towards social encounters, adaptability, flexibility, empathy, and the development of confidence in those competences.

These competences would be extremely difficult to assess in a History or Irish Studies written exam such as those assessments reported by Carolyn (Section 6.3). At the same time, governments and policy-makers are increasing funding international education opportunities based on the assumption that such experiences will develop future highly-skilled workers (Byram 1997). In reference to developing intercultural learning in particular, the role of the teacher and the classroom are challenged because these competences are acquired by students ‘outside institutional settings and without the guidance of a teacher, [and] will not necessarily have involved general educational processes and experiences’ (Byram 1997: 30). This is consistent with Janes’ (2008) study of American students in London, when he concludes that student were learning considerably more intercultural competences outside the classroom. This cohort of students did not have to learn a new language, but still needed to master British mannerisms, social contexts, and frames of reference. This is similar to my own cohort of North Americans in Ireland, and through this thesis, I determined that linguistic similarity does not prevent a student from developing these competences.

At a fundamental level, students may develop these competences through interactions with local residents amongst whom they are immersed. Byram (1997: 32) has

identified that students who participate in such study abroad programmes bring their own previous knowledge about their new locale, often stereotypical in nature, that they use to begin building new relationships. This varies with each student and changes the longer a student is abroad. Through the process of interaction, students are meant to develop not only a better understanding of their host cultures, but of their own as well, their attitudes, preconceived ideas of how the world works, and different ways of being in it. In order to accomplish this outcome, Byram suggests that students must develop specific knowledge, attitudes, skills of interpretation and relating to others, and skills of discovery through interaction (1997: 33). This is consistent with Cohen's studies of backpackers (2003a) and Jewish youth groups (2003b), where some tourists travel to experience a more authentic interaction with new people and cultures. Whereas Cohen's backpackers were interested in any cultural interaction, his Jewish informants wanted to have intercultural experiences with Israeli Jews in particular. This is consistent with my own informants, where some travelled to Ireland simply for the experience (such as Monika, Section 4.5) whereas others (such as Natalie, Section 8.6) travelled to connect with a family history in Ireland. While it is common for researchers to examine and assess the success of international students' ability to foster intercultural knowledge through interactions, comparatively few studies examine the experiences of host students to these interactions. Dunne (2009) has noted that host Irish students consider their international peers to be more engaged with their academic activities, due to their focus on professional aspirations, in comparison with local Irish students. Dunne concludes that Irish students prefer to make friends with other Irish students, rather than international students, because they have similar orientation to academic activities, share cultural frames of reference, and find those relationships more rewarding. This serves to isolate study abroad students, and reinforce a sense of an 'international bubble' that my informant Elizabeth reported (Section 8.4) as a sense of 'us vs. them' with her Irish housemates. Much more research is necessary to understand host-student's experiences of the intercultural exchange in order to determine what kinds of knowledge are being transmitted if host students are, as Dunne discovered, avoiding establishing friendships with international students.

By knowledge, Byram means the information that an individual would normally derive from family and other institutions of socialisation such as schools on both a conscious and unconscious level. This knowledge allows students to develop local, regional, religious, ethnic, and national identities that may simultaneously be comparable or contradictory. For the intercultural learner, developing intercultural knowledge involves learning the historical and social context, national memory, organisation of geographic space, and socialisation processes of both their new locale and their homes (Byram 1997: 58). Byram (1997: 34) called such knowledge '*savoirs*'. In order to facilitate this institutionally, many of the students I interviewed were required to take classes in Irish Studies, local history, geography, and music. These were very basic and introductory courses with content that Irish students were expected to have already learned in secondary school. As a result, these courses were limited solely to international student enrolment. The degree to which a student is able to develop this form of knowledge is dependent both on the design of the programme and the personal orientation of a student. Certainly, if a student wishes to go out and meet local people every day while studying abroad, any professor would try to encourage them. Sometimes, however, students require a bit more structure to accomplish this. On short-term study abroad programmes, for example, Lewis and Niesenbaum (2005) developed teaching strategies to foster the development of intercultural competences during a two-week study abroad course in Costa Rica. They found that the most effective way to teach their students about the socio-historical contexts of local village relations was to conduct community-based research in a remote area. This research was based on local needs, participating in locally-organised service opportunities, and emphasising research skills to enable students to go out on their own in order to develop their own intercultural knowledge, even after they have returned home. Without this structure, however, the student's personality enables or restricts the development of intercultural knowledge. For example, Gallucci (2011) conducted a study of British students in Italy for an ERASMUS exchange. While all of the students who participated in her study were meant to develop intercultural knowledge about Italy, occasionally local residents were not inclined to engage with the students in Italian. Indeed, Gallucci's (2011: 179-185) informant 'Lucy' was cast into the role of 'English-speaker' and she related knowledge about British society to Italian residents with whom she interacted instead.

While most of my informants were not as limited linguistically as the students in Lewis and Niesenbaum's or Gallucci's studies, they did not have any greater success establishing relationships with Irish residents with whom to exchange this form of knowledge. Rather, my informants tended to create friendship networks with other international students. This may arise from Dunne's findings that local residents often prefer to foster relationships with co-nationals rather than establish demanding intercultural relationships with study abroad students.

Intercultural attitudes are fostered through pre-existing curiosity and a 'readiness to suspend disbelief and judgement with respect to others' meanings, beliefs or behaviours' (Byram 1997: 34). Students who wish to develop positive intercultural attitudes must actively seek out others, both individually and socially, for opportunities to explore their new cultural worlds. They must have a willingness to learn the perspective of others and to question their cultural values and practices without judgement. They will experience varying degrees of adaptability to their new social context based on their own previous experiences and the degree of foreignness they experience in their new frames of reference (Byram 1997: 58). Byram has called this '*savoir être*'. Some study abroad programmes, such as Crawshaw *et al.* (2010), pre-selected students who had already developed intercultural attitudes as they were studying to become foreign-language teachers. Shupe (2007) identified that for students who have difficulties in cultivating intercultural attitudes, or who have negative experiences through conflicts with others, negative psychological development may result. Indeed, most of the available literature on study abroad experiences suggests that these are inherently positive experiences. It is just as likely, however, that students who have negative experiences might be hesitant to report these as their assessments might affect their academic performance, such as in the student diaries collected by Crawshaw *et al.* (2001).

Intercultural learners develop skills of interpreting and relating to others because of their experience. As they develop their intercultural knowledge and attitudes they develop the means to reflect more deeply on their own culture, and sub-cultures, and compare the differences between the two (Byram 1997: 36). Byram has suggested that as these

comparisons develop, students may have become more fully engaged with their environment or have begun to orient themselves towards sub-cultures of co-nationals with linguistic and ethnic links (Ayano 2006; Papatsiba 2006; Pearson-Evans 2006). Byram (1997) suggests that as students develop these skills, they begin to identify their own ethnocentric perceptions and areas of cultural misunderstanding in relation to both cultures that they now inhabit. Ideally, they should begin to be able to mediate intercultural conflicts between individuals as a result. Byram (1997: 61) has called these skills '*savoir comprendre*'. Dolby (2007) found this to be the case when she interviewed American study abroad students before and after September 11th, 2001. Before the attacks, she found that students did not question their American identity as they did after the US declared war on Iraq. These students, in relating to both their friends and strangers, were asked to account for the actions of their military and to respond to stereotypes of Americans as loud and drunk. Dolby found that in addition to greater adaptability to other points of view, some of her informants also began to reject some form of behaviour they now considered to be rude after living abroad. The events of September 11th challenged Dolby's informants to reconsider their imagined place in the world and clarify the type of person they wanted to become. While clearly identified as a traumatic event, such experiences are not uncommon. Indeed, some of my informants, such as Monika (Section 4.5) related expanding the cultural stereotypes of their new friends. Monika had managed to convince her new friends from Spain and Italy to travel with her through Eastern Europe, a place they had never imagined travelling to before. Regardless as to whether the students have positive or negative experiences in relation to local residents, any interactions with a different frame of reference has the potential to change a student's self-image and epistemology. In engaging with that process, students begin to develop clear ideas of the person they want to be when they become *adults*.

Finally, intercultural learning involves the development of skills of discovery and interaction. As intercultural knowledge, attitudes, and skills of interpreting and relating to others develops, a student should be developing their own explanatory system of cultural differences and be able to identify the significance, understanding the importance of verbal and non-verbal communication, and how this applies to particular sets of circumstances.

This skill is a strong determinant as to whether a student will develop intercultural competences. In analysing computer-mediated communications between language students, Belz (2005) found that each student had particular discursive styles to develop relationships and learn new things about each other that are culturally-derived. In this case, the German students felt that their American correspondent was not participating equally in their exchanges. Belz determined that while the American student wrote fewer words, and less often than his German counterparts, he did ask more questions of them, suggesting that he was more interested in learning about his German correspondents than they were of him. Belz also found that the way the German students constructed their questions could be viewed as rude within American English. It is only in engaging in dialogue that students can discover new things. This requires a desire to do so, and the personal ability (both linguistic and psychological) to engage with students who do not share the same frame of reference. Students should also be aware of the historical and contemporary relationships between the two cultures that the students straddle in order to have common ground upon which to build their relationship. All of these abilities must be in real-time and adaptable. Mediation skills for intercultural exchanges should develop concurrently to enable the intercultural learner to negotiate on a daily basis the forms of exchange that result from intercultural knowledge, attitudes, and interpretation and relating to those with whom they live. Byram (1997: 63-4) has called these skills '*savoir apprendre/faire*'.

Before I continue by exploring the places in which intercultural learning has the potential to result, I want to make two caveats. First, in this section I have used somewhat tentative language because while students are influenced by their experiences studying abroad, they may or may not develop some or all of these *savoirs* conceptualised by Byram. Each student is unique, and their experiences can vary widely depending both on their new social contexts and their own personalities, such as those selected in Crawshaw *et al.* (2010). Extroverts may have greater success or facility developing their intercultural competences than introverted students, and their ability to interact socially with others will affect the resulting intercultural learning. Other students might 'live in isolation, on the margins of the society in which they reside' (Byram & Feng 2006: 1-2). Students also go through several distinctive psychological phases during their study abroad periods, and

experiences of depression or exclusion (Papatsiba 2006; Byram & Feng 2006; Ayano 2006; McKinley *et al.* 1996) can directly impact the intercultural learning outcomes described in this section. These outcomes need not necessarily be positive. Indeed, Shaules (2007: 2) has identified that intercultural learners might not even realise that they are having negative experiences or that the experiences may confirm negative stereotypes held by the student when he states that student experiences may in fact ‘reinforce stereotypes, make sojourners critical or dismissive of the people they meet and cause them to denigrate differences’. Spurling (2006) found that Chinese students were marginalised from British students. Her Chinese informants were excluded from the ‘in-group’ in classes, and in student accommodations. This is consistent with my findings as well. My informants created friendship networks with other international students, but not with their Irish classmates. When asked why this might be, Michael responded that it was because Irish students did not attend classes (Section 6.2). This is a significant challenge for universities to overcome when they promise international students a ‘whole experience’ of studying abroad.

The second caveat relates to the literature available on this topic. Much of the literature examining intercultural learning has tended to focus on second-language learning – that is to say students who must relate to their new environment through a new language (see for example Byram & Feng 2006). Although this was not the case with my North American informants, specific vocabulary varied significantly, including medical nomenclature and linguistic slang between American, Canadian, and Irish English. This is not as challenging as the environments reported in Pearson-Evans (2006) about Irish students in Japan who were forced to speak in English despite their desire to practice Japanese or Burnett and Gardner’s (2006) study of Chinese students in the UK who were marginalised just as reported by Spurling (2006). The students I interviewed were developing their intercultural competences by interacting with other international students rather than with local Irish people, and through their tourism activities as they travelled in Europe. This is a concern for study abroad programme developers because in this sense the place is irrelevant. Marketing materials are developed annually to establish a marketable image and strategic alliances with other institutions in order to recruit students to specific countries, regions, cities, and universities (Mazzarol 1998). If the friendship network is of

more importance than the location, this will have a significant impact on a university's ability to compete in international markets. This would seem to be the case with my own informants, who rarely travelled into Limerick City but travelled extensively throughout Europe with other international students. Therefore, despite the relative lack of cultural and linguistic contrasts between American/Canadian and Irish identities, intercultural learning theory is useful in understanding the experiences of the students I met on fieldwork, and the type of learning they accrued in various settings because they were learning linguistic, sociolinguistic, discursive, strategic, socio-cultural, and social intercultural competences.

3.4.4 Settings that foster intercultural competences

While developing intercultural outcomes might be desirable, Byram (1997: 65) has identified two further locations for intercultural learning beyond the classroom: 'the pedagogically structured experience outside the classroom and the independent experience'. While many of the students I encountered in Belfast during my pilot study (Nielsen 2010) were on a formal fieldtrip organised by their home institutions, only one student (Respondent U, Section 5.2.2) reported this type of organised outing. More often, the students individually enrolled in formal classroom-based learning, but they organised their own travel without institutional assistance. They reported significantly greater intercultural outcomes from travelling with friends and spending time at home with other international students than they did from their classroom activities, which were not based on the transmission of cultural content, for the most part.

These three contexts – the classroom, the fieldtrip, and independent activity – necessarily offer different intercultural outcomes. Byram (1997) suggests that classroom instruction offers the student the opportunity to develop their skills with the guidance and experience of a teacher. A classroom offers a structured environment for practice and reflection on their own learning accomplished outside the classroom, and interactions with others who are undergoing similar experiences. In their analysis of programme designs for short-term study abroad opportunities, Lewis and Niesenbaum (2005) found that the best way to support classroom instruction was not with required readings or random interactions

with local residents. Rather, structured projects that reminded students of their classroom learning and reinforced those lessons in discussions could be considered to be guided in that they centre on a project relating to the lessons. This link was missing for my informants, who were enrolled on Irish Studies courses intended to introduce them to Irish history, literature, and other social sciences, but offered no reinforcing support to facilitate a continuation of these discussions outside of the classroom. They did engage in the level of dialogue Lewis and Niesenbaum hoped to foster in their interactions with other international students, and organised their own trips to engage with those lessons, such as Monika's intended plan to act as a tour guide for her Mediterranean friends while in Eastern Europe (Section 4.5). In so doing, she felt she would be able to reinforce the learning she had been offering them about the 'New Europe' to the east. This emphasises, however, that students are acting as more effective teachers than the Irish professors my informants were required to meet with for one hour each week. Activities outside the classroom offer a greater potential to encourage intercultural learning as a result.

Fieldtrips

Fieldwork and fieldtrips provide a bridge between supervision and independence. Students are organised by and work with a teacher, or a team of teachers, before their departure and upon their return, develop and assess curricular objectives, and focus on developing the skills of interaction between their students and local residents in real-time. While Roberts *et al.* (2001) established that fieldwork was a useful methodology to reinforce second-language learning amongst university students, they simultaneously identified that they need not travel to a foreign country to do so. They found that any interactions with local residents offer students an opportunity to foster intercultural learning 'at home', as part either of the Ealing Project or as formal study abroad students. This parallels fieldwork for anthropology students. Fieldwork is a necessary component to developing intercultural competences, and without those competences anthropology students would be unable to derive the necessary knowledge to write their doctoral ethnographies. Roberts *et al.* experimented with ethnographic practices in the hopes that fieldwork, and its inherent reflexivity, would offer second language students a more meaningful experience of their

study abroad opportunities. They determined, however, that it comes down to the personality and interests of the student, and whether they will take up opportunities presented to them while in the field to develop themselves interculturally. This is, ultimately, something a university cannot programme.

Independent learning

Independent learning results from individual reflection on experiences that have been serendipitously encountered. Intercultural learners who engage in independent learning ‘must become autonomous in their capacity for refining and increasing their knowledge, skills and attitudes’ (Byram 1997: 69). Fallis (2007: 202) has suggested that:

Serendipitous learning occurs in conversations among students, perhaps in the same course and in the same discipline, perhaps not. It occurs in corridors, coffees shops, pubs, and dorms, on and off campus.

This is, of course, how anthropologists learn as well. In another sense, serendipity reflects ‘having the time to carve out social relations, to soak in culture and to learn to act accordingly’ (Rivoal & Salazar 2013: 182). Whether serendipity or opportunism (Miller 2013), this form of learning for both the study abroad student and myself as an ethnographer results from our separation from home, friends, and families. We are meant to live ‘as an isolated foreigner in a new community’ who matures through developing the skills and competences to interact successfully with the strangers surrounding us (Roberts *et al.* 2001: 235). In their account of developing ethnographic competences for language learners, Roberts *et al.* (2001) found that whether the student studied in a foreign country or ‘at home’, the students, as ethnographers, develop the skills and competences Byram has outlined (Section 3.4.3). The students themselves create opportunities for interacting (potentially positively or negatively) that facilitate this form of learning. Therefore, the student is responsible for their learning, and in some respects attempts to assess this by educators seems impossible. If a student is found not to have developed intercultural competences after the fact, there is nothing that can be done to rectify this.

‘Independence’ can take on several meanings here. In the first instance, independent learning suggests that students develop knowledge and skills without the direct support of a teacher. The activities that provide this outcome, however, are almost never the result of isolated and individual experiences but result through student-teacher interactions with course content. The student-led teaching initiative designed by Marvell *et al.* (2013) formally structures required activities in which students researched a tourist attraction and then taught their peers what they had learned. Every student has a unique content of personal knowledge, and in planning their tours around Ireland and Europe, my informants shared this information during the week when they were together in student residences. This information became the basis for choosing destinations, organising transport, and travelling in each destination. None of my informants took these steps in isolation, and friendship networks heavily influenced this practice. Intercultural competences inherently requires at least two people, and in the context of this thesis the most meaningful experiences students reported in relation to their intercultural understanding was travelling with other international students, who were not necessarily co-national.

Second, upon reflecting on their informant responses about their intercultural learning in the UK, Burnett and Gardner (2006: 88) concluded that the students whom they interviewed developed a personal sense of independence because they saw themselves as more capable young women because they were ‘taking on the host culture perspective of them rather than that of their home culture’. This outcome suggests that the educational setting is not as important as opportunities for exploration in developing intercultural competence. Consequently, student identities mature because they take advantage of independent learning opportunities.

My informants fall into the category of independent learners. To assess the frequency or depth of their reflections is difficult, the students I interviewed were given an opportunity for reflection through the interview process in a similar free-narrative structure as formal intercultural assessment tools (Crawshaw *et al.* 2001). Byram (1997: 69-70) suggests that independent learning is probably the most significant of these three learning settings because ‘one could properly speak of a learning biography and expect that far more

cultural learning will take place outside the classroom than inside'. This was the case for my informants, as I have tried to reflect in the *immrama* chapters. It is impossible, it would seem, to separate the analytical from the experiential, and a deepened understanding of one does not offer a complete understanding of the learning that results amongst young adults while they are in university. Study abroad exchanges offer students new learning environments in which to learn about both themselves and the social and cultural worlds around them through experiential and imaginary wandering.

3.4.5 Student identities

Whether in the classroom, on a fieldtrip, or moving independently, students involved in study abroad programmes have intercultural encounters with other people, regardless of their personality type or access to particular opportunities. As detailed in the *immrama* of this thesis and in the work of others (such as Woitsch 2011; Burnett & Gardner 2006), students who study abroad develop multiple identities, as students and as *adults*, based on their experiences. Phipps and Gonzalez (2004: 17) have suggested that this is because 'human beings often have complex, multiple identities – local, regional, familial, religious, [and] ethnic', and these identities are necessarily impacted through study abroad experiences. This impact is inherently personal and contributes to a student learning not only about another culture, but about themselves and the person they would like to become in the future. They assert that this is because study abroad students are 'given an extraordinary opportunity to enter the 'linguaging' of others, to understand the complexity of the experience of others to enrich their own' (Phipps & Gonzalez 2004:3). In this sense, study abroad experiences have the potential to contribute to the formation of adult identities because students are in the process of developing their ideas, values, and aspirations as part of growing up. The idea that university students are more independent in general and can learn on their own is the foundation of adult learning theories. In the next section, I will examine educational tourism theories to determine the types of activities that can foster intercultural competences.

3.5 *Tourism settings facilitating intercultural experiences*

Cohen (2003b) has identified student tourism to be beneficial for the educational development of students. From his study of Jewish heritage tourists, he concludes that students grow intellectually, personally, spiritually, and socially because of their travels. Educational tourism focuses solely on the cultural experiences of students in order to generate socially-grounded learning outcomes. For example, in the context of educational programmes designed to introduce students to Jewish culture, Cohen suggests that personal transformations occur specifically because of cultural encounters in Israel. This transformational outcome is the result not only of formal educational settings, but also of supplementary programmes designed within the school for visiting and exchange students such as ‘a variety of tours, social and leisure activities, planned encounters with Israeli peers, and other informal educational activities’ (Cohen 2003b: 37). Although this statement is made in relation to Israeli study-abroad programmes, it can be applied to most study abroad opportunities. Educational tourism, as outlined in Cohen’s quotation, demonstrates the multilayered educational settings for fostering intercultural competences: classrooms, field trips, and independent travel. Byram (1997: 1-2) notes the difference between a tourist and a sojourner: a tourist seeks to find a static world that reinforces their way of living while a sojourner seeks out comparisons and ‘the opportunity to learn and be educated, acquiring the capacity to critique and improve their own and others’ conditions’. An educational tourist can be viewed as possessing the qualities of both the tourist and the sojourner simultaneously in that they have travelled for the purposes of learning something, but will have varying interests in having their worldview confirmed or challenged.

Educational tourism can take many forms, including students moving for the purpose of study tours, university summer school programmes, language schools, or exchange programmes, both on individual and on institutional levels. It has been conceptually defined as a tourist who spends at least one night away from their home, ‘for whom education and learning is a primary or secondary part of their trip’ (B. Ritchie 2003: 18). While this definition is sufficiently vague to include all forms of travel outside the

classroom for educational purposes, it focuses primarily on the travel activity of the student, thereby assuming that the pedagogical benefits of such learning experiences inherently manifest through travel itself. Early on, Flack (1976) suggested eight positive effects that international students studying in the US experienced as a result of educational tourism: linguistic improvement, academic achievement, specialised knowledge, experiencing new frames of reference, establishing friendships, familiarisation with professional resources, a better understanding of different ways of being in the world, and a deepened interest in local events. These outcomes are theorised to be the result of learning from others in a place with which the student is unfamiliar. All of these outcomes are positive for the student, which later researchers have asserted is not always the case (Shupe 2007; Brown 2008). This outcome is similar for apprentice anthropologists as well. Fieldwork alone is not enough, the PhD student must also return and integrate their learning at home with that developed in the field in order to succeed academically (Macía 2012). This idea that travel is the quintessential method with which to foster these outcomes pervades educational tourism literature. It is heavily reliant on tourism theory, however, and a balance must be developed between students as *tourists* and students as *learners*.

3.5.1 Independent intercultural learning through travel

The nature of educational tourism confronts students, as they are simultaneously being *tourists* and *hosts* to others because family and friends come to visit them. Acting as the host facilitates a developing sense of being *local* because of their protracted time abroad and their sense of liminality diminishes. Spending less and less time in their temporary home, students become tourists once again as they undertake short, more traditional trips to other cities and countries. The relative geographical size and political distribution of national boundaries in the European Union facilitates movement between countries in a single weekend, which appealed to the American and Canadian students who participated in this study. According to Gmelch (1997), it is not simply the time a student spends studying abroad that impacts their psychological development, however, but also the additional travel they undertake independently of their programmes. The process of intercultural learning, enculturation, and the overcoming of adversities can amplify these outcomes

because students are regularly confronted with the challenges of getting information and solving daily problems. In the following section, I examine the theoretical grounding of tourism and consider how this phenomenon relates to student learning.

3.5.2 Students as tourists

Anthropological interest in tourism may help to broaden our understanding of touristic phenomena from a pedagogical point of view. Chaney (2002: 196) has recently identified three dimensions specific to the analysis of tourist activities: ‘relations of production, characteristic narratives and typical modes of participation.’ The tourism industry invests heavily in preparing a cultural experience that represents each of these activities and that can be packaged for, and experienced by, tourists. They *produce* not only physical locations for tourism, but also narratives that present the regional uniqueness, local culture, and history. As a result, cultural heritage centres have emerged in recent years as popular tourist destinations. For Sheerin, heritage has become Ireland’s ‘tourism *product*: commodity to be marketed, packaged and sold to visitors’ (1998: 39). Tourists are meant to internalise these institutionalised narratives and integrate them in order to develop their own personal narrative of both tourist experiences as well as the places to which they travelled and the people they met. Many of my informants travelled to such destinations as ‘The Cliffs of Moher’, and visited the new heritage centre there. Evidence of their travels to this destination was promptly posted to ‘Facebook’ in the form of Costa’s (2009) ‘money shot’ (Photo 2). While these centres are major tourist attractions in themselves, as evidenced by local tours named ‘The Cliffs of Moher Tour’, many tourists at these destinations did not enter the heritage centre. Rather, they explored along the cliffs, traversing the safety fence, to get better views of the Atlantic Ocean, the Aran Islands, and the cliffs themselves. Tourists are not consuming this product as intended by tourism planners. While my informants listed the Cliffs of Moher as a destination, they did so only as part of longer lists, and did not report having internalised the prepared narratives available from the heritage centres. This is consistent with Costa’s (2009) findings that tourists did not listen to their tour guides, either on their buses or at attractions, and therefore did not learn about

the uniqueness of local sites, or their relevance to cultural and historical development. Engaging personally with these tourist destinations to learn about new places seems secondary, then, to the pride in claiming to have travelled to numerous destinations.

Photo 2: Glare over The Cliffs of Moher.



Source: © The Author, 2008.

Beginning with the opposite assumption, Cohen (1979) has suggested that all tourists are looking for some degree of cultural authenticity in their travels. Consequently, he has theorised a phenomenology of experience in which there are five types of tourist experiences. In this way, the experiences of the tourist while abroad are inherently influential, even experiences at a superficial level. These five modes of touristic experience are the *recreational*, the *diversionary*, the *experiential*, the *experimental*, and the *existential* (Cohen 1979: 183-191). For the recreational tourist, entertainment is paramount. The local culture presents the tourist with different, enjoyable activities from those experienced at home, such as produced in the Irish heritage centres described by Sheerin (1998). In terms of educational tourism, such entertainment venues might include cultural activities, but also formal lessons in the classroom in which the lecturer and course content meet the academic expectations of their student audience. A diversionary tourist is looking for a similar experience to that of a recreational tourist, with the exception that the interaction with local

culture is slightly higher as it is meant to make the tourist forget, temporarily, their world and lives at home. The initial phase of studying abroad is often organised in terms of orientations, classes, societies and clubs, and as students acculturate to these differences, they may begin to explore on their own. The experiential tourist is seeking new experiences outside of their cultural frame of reference that will rejuvenate and invigorate the life they have already built at home. This might be best characterised as the fulfilling of academic requirements, locating distant relatives, and bringing back stories and photographs of their experiences abroad. For the experimental tourist, the local and authentic culture must be experienced as much as possible because they hope that through new experiences they will discover answers to their own problems that had not been found at home. Such students might be on their second period abroad, or on an extended stay. Short-term study abroad students rarely have the time to experience their new frame. Finally, the existential tourist seeks out the answers for their own lives within the culture and history of another region. In this regard, their experiences must be as authentic as possible because they are looking for a cultural centre, a spiritual ground that they can use to reframe their existence in the world. A common expression of this type of tourism is home-stay and cultural/linguistic immersion programmes.

There is limited tourism literature relating specifically to students other than that which has been discussed in this section. Anthropologists have been interested in the experiences of students, however, and Gmelch (1997) and Cohen (1979) have begun to construct a theoretical understanding of educational tourism and international experiences. While in this thesis I am primarily interested in the personal outcomes of these experiences, further critique of the anthropology of tourism will serve to deepen our understanding of studying abroad as a touristic phenomenon and the ‘touristic biography’ (Cohen 1979: 192) that students recounted and I have included as *immrama*.

The theoretical conceptualisation of liminality has contributed to the anthropological critique of tourism. By invoking anthropologists Turner (1969) and van Gennep (1960), Graburn (1983: 11) suggests that touristic activities are comparable to ‘rites of passage’ or ritual play because ‘tourism involves for the participants a separation from

normal “instrumental” life and the business of making a living’. He goes on to suggest that such experiences offer the tourist an opportunity to practice ‘another kind of moral state in which mental, expressive, and cultural needs come to the fore’. As a ritual, tourism ‘has a beginning, a period of separation characterized by “travel away from home”; a middle period of limited duration to experience a “change” in the non-ordinary place; and an end, a return to the home and the workday’ (Graburn 1983: 12). This process is incorporated into study abroad programmes, where it can be repeated as often as the student determines. This is similar in nature to student-led intercultural learning opportunities. My informants organised travel around Ireland, and Europe, encountered local residents and other tourists, and returned ‘home’ to tell their friends about their experiences. Some, such as Rose (Section 4.1), travelled to destinations selected by her athletic club while others, such as Michael (Section 6.2), selected destinations where friends were already established. Therefore, while Rose deepened her friendships with the other students involved in her Trampoline club, Michael established and expanded his friendship networks with European musicians. At the end of every weekend adventure, they returned to Limerick to take up their ‘work’, attending lectures. Tourist activities, therefore, offered Rose and Michael opportunities to learn about and with people who did not share their frame of reference in a manner that is impossible to replicate in a classroom.

Using this analogy of ritual play, Graburn suggests two types of tourism. In the first instance, touristic rituals happen cyclically in the life of the tourist, whether every weekend, annually, or in commemoration of family or religious holidays. Second, forms of ritual play are to be found in youth tourism, which takes the form of a rite of passage marking a significant time in a tourist’s life or the passage from one stage to another such as the GAP year (Graburn 1983), backpacking (Cohen 2003a), internships (Toncar & Cudmore 2000), or volunteerism (Sin 2009). Educational periods in international contexts provide this form of liminality, and the opportunities that such temporality offers, including the personal development of the student. Gmelch (1997: 483) identifies a common critique of formalised educational tourism when he quotes a colleague who suggested that ‘Europe was for the students a big shopping mall in which to hang out, not a place to challenge one’s cultural categories’. While this is certainly possible, as I will establish in Chapter 7, it is up to the

student to determine the nature, frequency, affect of their interactions with local residents, and to challenge their frame of reference. Educators can create spaces for students to reflect on these experiences, but the student is responsible for this type of learning.

On the other hand, Carr (2005: 184) suggests that the university itself encourages students to become tourists, providing resources, agencies, and support for independent travel on personal holidays or as part of an organised trip that takes the student away from their new, if temporary home. He suggests that 'students also gain from engaging in international mobility as it offers them access to new learning experiences and, potentially, higher quality education than in their home country' (2005: 191). Given that students may be engaged in educational activities for many years, and have many school breaks and opportunities to travel, in combination with the proliferation of lifelong learning opportunities, it seems counter-productive to use length of time or temporality to define the nature of educational tourism. Educational tourism should be described as the purposeful travel to another destination with the outcome of intercultural learning and personal development.

The temporality of educational tourism is problematic for understanding the activities of international students in the university sector because the duration of their trips and the destinations are not fixed, as was suggested by B. Ritchie (2003: 18). Inherent in their status as international students, the *home* from which they leave and return is also not a fixed place. This point strains our understanding of traditional tourist activities because the starting and stopping points of their journeys cannot be clearly discerned, nor can the sense of liminality, which sometimes arises from travel. Further examination will be useful to distinguish these two disciplinary approaches to the same phenomenon, and might include individual curiosity, diversionary or procrastination tactics, desire for entertainment, and surprises that happen along the way as students begin to explore a new frame of reference. In spite of these limitations, Gmelch's conclusions offer an opportunity to examine this process from a different point of view and compare the results. In my thesis, the uniformity of students from the US cannot be assumed, where students are from various regions, studying on different programmes, and must by necessity make new types

of friendship networks, which was not required of students in Gmelch's (1997) study. Comparing the experiences and travel patterns of these two different types of students, based in different locations of Europe, offers a rich understanding of the role travel plays on personal development.

3.5.3 Defining a student tourist

A *tourist* is difficult to define and a more complex construct on examination. Many correlate verbs/adjectives have been used to characterise touristic aims, aspirations, intentions, experiences, and outcomes. Mobility, nomadism, and sojourning each account for one aspect of the touristic phenomenon. At the basis of our current understanding of tourism, van den Berghe (1996: 551-2) suggests that tourism is transient in nature because 'it is a form of temporary nomadism in that tourists step out of their normal life and social setting, and interact with natives on their own ground'. This conceptualisation is consistent with the idea of an intercultural student traveller to a new place that is interacting with local residents. In order to account for such breadth in understanding, Nash (1976: 84) has suggested that tourism is a cross-cultural phenomenon that has existed across all cultures and throughout history. In the case of educational tourism, *The Grand Tour* (Section 1.2) has been transformed from a long-term, guided tour of Europe into a concentrated burst of student-led travel. Students are now responsible to arrange, experience, and reflect upon their interactions with local residents without the guiding support of faculty members on a daily basis. However, as Bruner (1996) has claimed, the tourist will be affected through the experience, but an experience will affect each tourist differently. Similarly, Badone (2004: 184) highlights this claim when she notes that 'defamiliarization heightens cultural awareness'. It is this potential for heightened awareness while abroad that offers greater opportunities for intercultural learning.

In his ethnographic analysis of his own anthropology students studying at the University of Innsbruck in Austria, Gmelch (1997) found that his students were using their Eurorail passes to travel extensively on the weekends to Italy, Austria, Germany, Czech Republic, Hungary, France, and Switzerland. He was particularly interested in their

touristic mobility, which he suggested expanded the classroom course. Rather than limiting themselves to an Austrian university classroom and the local environs surrounding it, these students experienced many more linguistic and cultural frames of reference than the programme had initially intended. My informants travelled to many of the same destinations as Gmelch's (Chapter 5). The distinction between these two cohorts of students being that while Gmelch's students travelled using a rail pass that was obligatory to purchase as part of their academic programme, my informants mobilised different forms of economical transportation for their travel, such as the national bus service and low-cost airlines. This demonstrates that students seem to be more preoccupied with experiencing as many different frames of reference as possible, rather than establishing competences in one frame in particular. Diverse experiences foster social and socio-cultural intercultural competences. However, it is only possible to learn linguistic and socio-linguistic competences from extended interactions with a particular group of people. This seems to be the primary difference between foreign-language students in the intercultural learning literature and general study abroad students in educational tourism literature.

Study abroad students possess multiple identities simultaneously, including adolescent explorer, independent adult, social rebel, academic maverick, sojourner, learner, hardened adventurer, host, homesick child, lonely ghost, mute guest, or overwhelmed voyager to name but a few.

3.5.4 Benefits of tourism

Researchers examining educational tourism phenomena do not intentionally omit the learning outcomes of these experiences. This suggests that a tourist who undertakes mobility with a specific interest or goal in mind 'tends to seek durable benefits such as self-actualisation, self-enrichment, recreation or renewal of self, self-expression, social interaction and sense of belonging, and also seek lasting physical products of the activity' (B. Ritchie 2003: 28). From an experiential point of view, a lasting effect of educational tourism can be realised in overseas internships. While overseas, the student has the opportunity to participate in general touristic behaviour, sightseeing, meeting new people,

and collecting souvenirs. As van 't Klooster, van Wijk, Go, and van Rekom (2008) suggest, management students can gain meaningful learning that will benefit them during their professional careers by interacting with people who do not share frames of reference, learning to manage local social and historical circumstances, and developing their personal business acumen. Business internships are targeted learning opportunities and popular amongst professional occupations. Carolyn (Section 6.3) had originally hoped to arrange a co-operative internship in Ireland as part of her engineering degree, but the business was unable to accept her when it came time to travel. In order to take advantage of this opportunity, Carolyn decided to be a traditional study abroad student instead. She had hoped to gain experiences of working with an international engineering firm, and make connections that would help her to find employment after graduation. This type of activity, along with volunteerism (Sin 2009), are recruiting a different type of student than traditional study abroad programmes because they offer a space to learn about new frames of reference while contributing to a community. Internships and volunteerism provide similar outcomes, however, to the self-directed intercultural learning students develop because in both situations the students establish friendship networks. This is consistent with B. Ritchie's (2003) definition of educational tourism, in which he identifies nine settings for educational tourists that generally produce positive learning outcomes: working holidays, volunteerism, ecotourism, museums, skills acquisition classes, cultural immersion programmes, language immersion programmes, local, and international school and university fieldtrips. Within these non-traditional, experiential learning settings, B. Ritchie (2003: 15) suggests that the 'personal impacts' of educational tourism include the development of individual values and beliefs, broader education and learning, cultural understanding, and appreciation. This is consistent with the intercultural learning competences outlined in Section 3.4.3.

3.5.5 Tourist motivations

Educational tourism theorists have tended to focus on the holiday motivations of these organised students in relation to their 'passive, social and hedonistic activities' abroad, rather than academic or professional learning outcomes (B. Ritchie 2003: 185). This focus,

however, limits our scope when researching educational tourism because many students identify themselves as backpackers (Richards & Wilson 2004). As backpackers, students want to travel to new places, meet new people, learn about the local history and culture, go shopping, enjoy local cuisine, and just ‘hang out’ with local residents. Richards and Wilson suggest that this form of educational tourism comprises 70% of student tourists. This is a group of students that may, or may not, choose to attend formal educational settings. My informants, while enrolled officially as students in Ireland, spent much more time travelling in this manner than learning on campus. This suggests that they were combining the ‘social and hedonistic’ and ‘academic or professional’ aspirations in their travelling, rather than B. Ritchie’s assertion that the first supersedes the latter. Indeed, Hansel (1988: 187) concludes that students become ‘less materialistic, more adaptable, more independent in their thinking, more aware of their home country and culture, and better able to communicate with others and to think critically’ as a result of this academic wandering.

3.5.6 Using narrative accounts

Tourists create narratives when they return home as part of their touristic experiences (Parrinello 2001). In their analysis of travelogues on the internet, Pearce and Foster (2007) found this form of self-narration to allow backpackers to develop and articulate backpacker identities. Travelling is only half of this equation, the other is that a reflexive narrative is often shared with friends, family, or on the internet. Educational tourists are constantly in the process of developing travel narratives, both when recounting their experiences to others and when offering suggestions to others about where they might want to go, and why. This can be seen in my interview with Natalie (Section 8.6). While I was interviewing her about her experiences of studying abroad in Ireland, her responses contrasted this Irish experience with her first study abroad semester in Argentina. This offered me an opportunity to examine not only how students construct narratives about their travels, but also how they articulate how travel has affected them. This is, therefore, a useful methodology to approach educational tourism research, which I will apply in the remainder of this thesis.

3.5.7 Confidence building

Gmelch (1997) observed that his students gained self-confidence as a direct result of travelling independently of their parents because they felt empowered to deal with unfamiliar situations. Similarly, Robertson (2001) asserts that fieldtrips challenge perceptions, builds confidence, and changes attitudes of the children who participate in them. This is equally true for adults, and I analyse this outcome in detail in Section 5.5. This is an important finding in relation to the field of intercultural learning because it suggests that it is not the content of their learning in the sense of their linguistic improvement, or developing knowledge of social and cultural frames of reference, that has the longest effect on student development. Rather, the experience of knowing that one can overcome obstacles and challenges is the most concrete benefit of educational tourism. Linguistic competence fades due to lack of practice while historical and social knowledge can become blurred in memory with other frames of reference. Nevertheless, the sense of identity and confidence that results from educational tourism endures. This is certainly the case for all of the students whose *immrama* I have included in this thesis. Educational tourism creates an opportunity for students to experience new frames of reference that they may incorporate into adult identities. As they move towards adulthood, they develop new ways of learning as well, and transformative learning theory gives us access, as researchers, to examine this period of transition.

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have outlined the epistemological wandering I completed as part of my doctoral work. I outlined how intercultural learning, educational tourism, transformative learning, and the anthropology of adulthood academic literatures informed my understanding of transitions towards adulthood that might result from studying abroad. Four crucial themes emerged for me because of this wandering that I will carry forward into my thesis. In the first instance, conceptualising a bounded classroom as the site for intercultural and transformative learning limits both our understanding of what it means to learn, and how students learn to become *adults* because it excludes analysis of how students

learn about themselves through their interactions with others. Second, the friendships that study abroad students have already established and are establishing while abroad significantly influence how students undertook new opportunities, shared their experiences, and recreated a new sense of self in relation to these experiences. Third, it is up to the student to take up serendipitous opportunities as they arise that might create opportunities for intercultural and transformative learning. It is in overcoming experiences and meeting new people that students can begin to re-imagine their future adult selves in new ways. Finally, students create narrative texts as they complete assessments or speak with researchers that should be analysed in and of themselves if we are to understand how an individual sees themselves experiencing new experiences, meeting new people, trying new things, and internalising the lessons from those experiences they wish to incorporate into the *adult* they wish to become. In the chapter that follows, I present the narratives of four of my informants, the aspirations that motivated them to study abroad, and how these contribute to their future plans.

Chapter 4 Learning on demand



Surviving my trip to Vaasa is probably one of the most memorable events in my life. I remember being very excited about the trip, making all the necessary arrangements for my travel and accommodation. I had finished the paper that I was to present at the conference, packed my bags for the type of weather I anticipated, recorded important contact information, and set out to the airport for my first trip to Finland.

There was one flaw to my plan. I had arranged to fly to Tampere from London, Tampere being the closest airport to Vaasa. One of the conference organisers had arranged for me to spend the night in a hostel in Tampere because my flight was to arrive late in the day. I spent very little time in immigration, had no luggage to pick up, and therefore quickly managed to catch the bus to Tampere. However, I had seriously underestimated the travel time required between the airport and the city centre. Now begins on-demand learning, a term borrowed from the business world

whereby services, goods and parts are delivered at the point of need in the process.

By the time I arrived at the hostel, it had closed for the night. I rang and rang, and spent an hour outside the hostel hoping someone would come, but to no avail. For some reason my cellular phone did not work, so I wrote down the telephone number posted on the door in case of late arrival, and faithfully set out to find a pay phone.

In retrospect, either I had no idea what a public phone looks like, or there are no public phones in Tampere. After another hour or so of walking, I gave up, and started inquiring at every hotel that was still open if they had room for the night. Just my luck, the hotel in front of the train station was fully booked because of a different conference, but they recommended another one to me. They gave me a map with the hotel that they referred me to, and I was off again. It turned out that this conference in Tampere was no small affair, and I discovered on my walk (by now 2:00am) that every hotel in Tampere was fully booked. Every... single... one.

Concierges even called each other, hoping to find room for me.

Finally, and resigned to my fate, I asked if they knew where there was a 24hour coffee shop in Tampere. The only one that the concierge could think of was on the other side of town, a restaurant in gas station. Moreover, from the hesitation in his voice, I gathered that this might not be the safest choice. With nowhere else to go I set out across town yet again, but this time going further than the boundaries of the tourist map, into the wider wilderness outside the touristic city centre.

Normally, even the idea of wandering the streets of my hometown at night by myself is unfathomable. This night demanded it of me, however. On this warm May night in the midst of a forest in Finland, the sun only set for a few hours. The hours of darkness were filled with an ambient hue of the midnight sun to come later in the summer.

I walked into the gas station and was relieved to find that coffee is a universal word (*kahvi* in this case). I ordered a snack as well, and sat down in the restaurant area for two hours, the darkest ones of the night. I watched truck drivers have breakfast, young men

playing video lottery machines, and many young people popping in to buy gas. Finding myself dozing off, I decided to explore more of Tampere in the few hours before the train station opened at 7:00am. I explored the city's rich architectural heritage of orthodox churches, gardens full of tulips, and met few people on the street.

Photo 3: An orthodox church at 4:00am.



Source: © The Author, 2009.

At 7:00am I set off for the train station. I managed, somehow, to communicate to the ticket agent that I wanted to go to Vaasa that morning and waited for the 9:30am train. I was not the only person who had spent the night outside, I guessed, as about seven people wandered in one or two a time, to sleep inside the station. I did not want to fall

asleep and miss my train, so I pushed myself very hard to stay awake.

Photo 4: Flowers in Tampere, 4:30am.



Source: © The Author, 2008.

Finally, I was on my way, listening to the train announcements in Finnish of all the stops the train would make. My ticket informed me that I must change trains in Seinäjoki, and I was relieved when the announcement became English. It seemed as if the four to five minutes Finnish announcement was condensed into 'Next stop Seinäjoki'. A few minutes after getting settled into my seat I began to wonder at the forest while I looked out of the window as the train pulled out of the city.

When I awoke (it was not my intention to sleep), the train was not moving. We were stopped in what seemed like farmland although I could not see the station, let alone a sign, but people were getting on and off the train. I

panicked and began madly packing up, finding my jacket, and leapt to my feet. I could then see the other side of the train, with more fields in view. Seinäjoki was supposed to be a major station where two train lines met. 'In the field?' I thought to myself. I asked the man sitting on the other side of the aisle if this was Seinäjoki. I asked in English, not having any other common language available to me. The man got very nervous, said 'no', and made a gesture that I could only interpret as 'next'. Perhaps this stop was too small to be of interest to non-Finnish speakers. Maybe there had been an announcement and I had just slept through it.

In any event, Seinäjoki was the next stop and much as I had imagined it would be. I quickly caught my connection to Vaasa, checked into my hotel, had a shower and a much needed nap, and then went on to my conference. As I sat down to hear the first series of papers, a colleague sat down in front of me. He was talking to someone else so I opted to say hello later. After thinking for just a moment he turned around and said 'Oh good, Katherine, you made it!' Made it, indeed!

Photo 5: Vaasa's water tower.



Source: © The Author, 2008.

The remainder of the trip went well. My paper was well received. I made new friends and caught up with others that I had not seen in two years. On my return trip, I was able to see Tampere in the daytime and full of sunshine. This experience remains in my mind, even after the memories of Vaasa have diminished, because this was my first night 'on the streets'. In a place where I did not speak the language I had managed to find my way around, and find a safe place. I had managed it all, on my own. And while this night still makes me smile, I became much more self-assured that I could overcome adversity and make my way in a new place all by myself.

International education opportunities, like those offered to study abroad students, offer not just academic opportunities to develop themselves as

adults, but also serendipitous obstacles that, once overcome, can potentially improve the self-confidence of those developing towards adulthood and lead to learning more about themselves.

My trip to Vaasa was my first trip undertaken during my 'fieldwork' period. While I had yet to arrive at my field site in Ireland, I was still sojourning on my academic journey and building relationships that would come to shape how I understood myself in the future. It is just this type of opportunity for learning and self-transformation that interested me during my fieldwork. In particular, my informant Rose also reported a similar experience of confidence resulting from being able to overcome a new and adverse situation, in her case medical treatments and follow-ups in a foreign country.

Photo 6: A manhole cover, Tampere.



Source: © The Author, 2008.

4.1 Immram of Rose



At the age of 20, Rose had never truly been alone before. The time she spent with other students in Ireland was the first time she had truly felt independent. She had always lived in close proximity to her parents in the southern United States, travelled with friends to Mexico, and was engaged to be married upon her return from Ireland. Rose saw this as her first, and perhaps only, opportunity to break away from family and friends and to see if she could survive independently from her familial support structure, which she was beginning to resent. She stated it this way:

My parents are not really letting me be independent. They come by my apartment whenever they want and don't even text. I needed a break for my sanity. My life was strict and stringent. I held down three jobs while taking five courses. That's 20 hours of class, with 30 hours of homework, and 40 hours working each week... I wanted a break from that monotony

of school... and test my independence from my boyfriend.

Without her habitual frame of reference, Rose tried several new activities that she would not have done at home. These new experiences had profound effects on her self-confidence and personal development. First, and most evidently, Rose travelled to Europe for the first time, alone. While she was enrolled at an Irish university, she also took the opportunity to travel, going on day trips to London and longer weekend trips to Switzerland and Paris. This was a tremendous opportunity for Rose as she saw 'no future for myself until the age of 60', owing to employment and familial obligations that she expected after graduation.

The second activity in which Rose participated that offered a significant boost to her self-confidence was enrolling in social activities and clubs. She was truly inspired by her experience with the trampoline club. This club not only allowed Rose to have an organised group of friends to travel with around Ireland but also challenged her physically. She enjoyed learning new manoeuvres and pushing her body farther than she had

ever done gymnastically before. This adventure, however, resulted in a potentially serious accident, which Rose simply took in her stride. The confidence Rose gained from dislocating her shoulder could not have resulted from any planned lesson offered by a university, but from her point of view had probably the most significant impact on Rose's personal development while she was in Ireland. She managed to go to the hospital and take care of all the relevant paperwork by herself, and attend all the necessary medical follow-ups without the support of her family and friends. In spite of her injury, she considered the experience to be 'the best thing ever!'

This independence and risk-taking that had evolved because of her newfound self-confidence emanated throughout the interview. At the outset, however, Rose reported that she had not always been so adventurous. She was very concerned about the academic risk of her studies abroad, and chose this particular university because it offered advanced mathematics courses that were taught in English. She had very few options in relation to travel destinations but could not have been happier in Ireland. Rose was in the final year of her actuary's

degree and postponed her graduation by one semester in order to come to Ireland for her study. She chose to reduce the number of courses she was completing in order to have a better experience in Ireland by making time for social activities beyond traditional academic concerns for grades and course credits.

Photo 7: Entrance to UL.



Viking-inspired flagpoles visible from the city-centre. I often saw international students taking photos of these as I walked to the campus.

Source: © The Author, 2008.

Rose's confidence was evident from the moment we met. We had agreed to meet for an interview in the Library coffee shop so that she could go and study afterwards. I did not recognise her from her photograph online and she

passed by me and entered the café. The café was completely full and had at least sixty people talking, banging and clinking dishes. It was always difficult to find a table, let alone a person you were not familiar with, which is why I always suggested meeting outside when students suggested this location for their interviews. She came back outside, approached me directly out of four people waiting outside of the café, and we went inside for coffee. We ended up talking for over three hours, about her studies, answering the interview schedule questions, and then as part of a general discussion about her life, and my own, afterwards. I was not in an equally confident position at the time. Despite the confidence of surviving my ordeal in Tampere, it was still early in my fieldwork when I met Rose and I was still very unsure about meeting new people, my interview and rapport techniques, and whether I was ever getting anything that I might be able to use later as I wrote my thesis. My interview with Rose seemed to increase my confidence in my own identity as a developing anthropologist, and served to reframe how I had understood previous interviews, how I would design my online survey, and new

theoretical literatures that might be included in my analysis. During my 45-minute walk home my mind reeled with the implications of meeting this extraordinary young woman.

It was after my interview with Rose that I began to seriously consider the development of self-confidence that was fostered by international student mobility and began to ask specific questions regarding what the students felt they were getting out of their experiences. I also reviewed my previous interviews for occasions of reflection about their personal development while in Ireland, and analysed the responses in this new light. This interview was significant for developing my theoretical orientation to my project as I had not considered transitions to adulthood as a significant aspect of studying abroad. Personal development was not necessarily the primary motivation for studying abroad, but it seemed to be an important outcome. In the remainder of this chapter, I will focus on the personal aspirations of students to study abroad.

4.2 *Personal aspirations*



After my fieldwork in Ireland had been completed, I was eager to begin my own 'study abroad' semester in a country outside

that of my home institution: two months visiting the Institut for Uddannelse og Pædagogik (DPU), a department of Aarhus University in Denmark. I began to sift through my data, draft ideas on how my thesis might unfold, meet other students, and explore Denmark. These are all academic and touristic interests that my informants had discussed with me regarding their time in Ireland.

My fiancé and I travelled to Copenhagen in August 2009, and were met by one of his friends at the airport. To my surprise however, we encountered this friend inside the secured part of the airport terminal. As a local tour guide, he had the ability to pick up clients in the baggage claim area. We took the train to Copenhagen and proceeded to get lost in a network of streets trying to find the student accommodation. Given how easily I was able to wander around Vaasa

alone and at night, being lost with other people was an adventure. Even having Google maps on our cellular phones and a local tour guide was not helpful and every person we asked on the street gave us different directions.

Photo 8: Architectural exhibition at the Observatory, Copenhagen.



Source: ©The Author, 2009.

In the end, we found the accommodation, were settled in our room, and the next day we began to explore the university. I found my office, picked up my student laptop, and we began trying to find the necessities as in any new town: restaurants and grocery stores. We explored the city centre of Copenhagen,

arranged local cellular phone numbers, transit tickets, and oriented ourselves in a new space. Soon my fiancé had to return to work, and I was left to my academic and touristic activities on my own. Initially travelling with family was common for many of my female informants (such as Teresa, Section 6.5), whose parents came to Ireland to drop them off and to help them move home at the end of their studies.

Very shortly after arriving, I had the opportunity to join other anthropology students from Copenhagen University at their Megaseminar in Sandbjerg in September, an annual retreat to meet one another and share their research. This was an academic retreat more than a conference and we travelled to Sandbjerg from Copenhagen together on the train. We spent three days in Sandbjerg, attending presentations and getting to know one another. One of the highlights for me was the traditional Danish Christmas dinner that was served on our last evening in this enchanting place. Pearson-Evans (2006) found that Irish students in Japan had similar opportunities to eat special meals with their hosts at unconventional times. This seminar was a deeply compelling

experience, and I returned reinvigorated for my studies at the university in Copenhagen. I spent my time in Denmark either immersed in my work or marvelling at the amount of English language television on the local stations while I was sick. Every new place seemed to provide new opportunities to collect immunities to different viruses, and Copenhagen proved to be just like all the others in this respect.

Photo 9: The woods in Sandbjerg.



Source: © The Author, 2009.

This study period away from home was an academic opportunity to not only travel to a desired destination, but also to develop my work and potentially advance my career. My access to both human and academic resources in Denmark was unparalleled either before

or after my time there. I attended seminars with my research group, met with my supervisor, attended the Megaseminar, and shared an office with three other women also working on education-related topics. I was inspired to say the least! I was able to make future connections with the academic community in Scandinavia that I hoped would help my career prospects once I had completed my Ph.D. in much the same way the postgraduate students I met in Belfast used a summer school programme to open opportunities for research and make personal connections with academics in Ireland (Nielsen 2010). Time will tell about this outcome.

At the end of my sojourn in Copenhagen, I realised that while my academic expectations had been exceeded, I had not travelled much through the area, and decided to take a bus tour outside of Copenhagen to see more of the countryside, landscapes, castles, and learn a bit more about Danish history. For many of the people I interviewed during my fieldwork it was important to find a balance between academic and personal goals for their study abroad. The stories of the three international students that follow

reflected this delicate balance and the role such study abroad opportunities have for academic development. They stand out in comparison to the other students included in this thesis because they were not from Canada or the US and English was a second-language. Their time in Ireland was meant primarily to be a time for academic courses offered in English. The North American students that are the focus of this thesis sought both educational and travel opportunities. The experiences of English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) students, however, typify my own experience of the international travel I completed in Denmark

Photo 10: Manhole cover, Copenhagen.



Source: © The Author, 2010.

4.3 Immram of Yeomi



I travelled to Galway City in November, in order to attend a conference hosted by a friend I had made while in Vaasa earlier that year. I thought that it would be an opportunity to combine conducting some interviews with a bit of travelling, to meet with a friend, and to hear some interesting research papers. My friend recommended the university IT Café as a good place to talk to people and that is where I arranged to meet Yeomi.

Being unfamiliar with the university in Galway, I quickly became turned around inside the building where corridors did not seem to continue for more than 100 metres. Eventually I was able to locate the small café, which had only seven or eight movable tables and was well-suited for my interviewing purposes. Relying on my technique of meeting students outside of the café, which had worked so well in meeting Rose, was not helpful this time. There were couches outside of the café entrance with several dozen people moving about,

back and forth, in and out of café. Luckily, I arranged the interview over ‘Facebook’ and we had been able to see pictures of each other before the meeting.

Photo 11: The Quadrangle, NUIG.



Source: © The Author, 2008.

After brief introductions and I had purchased coffees for us, we settled into a table inside the café and proceeded with my more structured interview questions. Yeomi, 21, said that she could not have been happier. A Mexican student at the National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG), she was completing courses in drama, Renaissance literature, and English literature in Ireland to gain credits towards her degree in English language grammar, linguistics, and translation. She loved her seminars, where she met many other international students. Ireland had been her second

choice as destination because she had preferred to study in England. As it ultimately proved impossible for her to travel there, she chose to study in Galway City instead of several possible American destinations. Her university provided funding for academic tuition, a return airfare ticket, accommodations, and medical insurance. In exchange for this funding, Yeomi was expected to make a presentation upon her return to Mexico.

Yeomi was very interested in her academics. She found the structure of learning and teacher-student interactions to be very different from those with which she was familiar. She began by explaining that at her university in Mexico they did not have lectures. Instead, learning was centred on seminars, and this learning was assessed in three exams per semester, essays, and regular homework that accounted for a small percentage of the final grade. Yeomi really enjoyed her classes in Galway not simply because of the academics, but also because she could meet many other international students. Overall she was very impressed with her time in Ireland, and when I asked her if she would recommend it to others she rolled her eyes and said ‘Oh yeah, put

Ireland as the first option! [laughs] I’m very glad I didn’t go to England. The Brits are more serious, so Ireland is better!’ She found the experience to be challenging overall, though she did report that she was more confident in her skills because it was not easy to be so far away from home in a place that uses a different language.

Photo 12: Walking in Galway City centre.



Source: © The Author, 2008.

In fact, she liked Ireland so much that she had requested permission to remain there for another semester, but her home institution refused this request. As a result, she was trying to make the most of what little time she had left in Europe. At the university, Yeomi was busy

with trips organised by the International Society, which included bus tours to the Aran Islands and an overnight trip to England. She also learned Irish dance, judo, and participated in dramatic workshops in Spanish. Through these activities and her academic studies, Yeomi had 'gained more confidence and skills. It is not easy to be that far away from home, but being able to practice my English has made things easier'. She complemented her studies with travel, and she was very happy to be able to travel to England and to mainland Europe. Yeomi's career as an English translator would undoubtedly be enhanced through her experiences in Ireland.

Photo 13: River Corrib, Galway City.



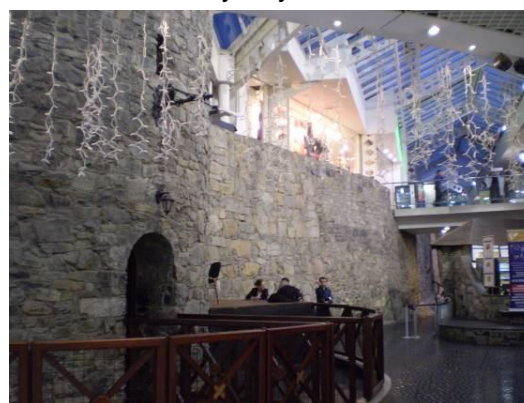
Source: © The Author, 2008.

Yeomi was the only student who reported trying to stay longer in Ireland

than originally intended. Due to institutional requirements or financial limitations for North American students generally, most of those I talked to were happy with the one-semester programme design.

In many ways, Yeomi's story is not unique. Yeomi, like Lin whose story follows, was taking specific courses that could be applied to professional aspirations upon graduation. This international travel became vital towards developing confidence in their chosen professions, and in the development of friendship networks (discussed in Section 5.2.3) that would further support their careers in the future.

Photo 14: Galway City walls.



Located within a shopping complex.

Source: © The Author, 2008.

4.4 Immram of Lin



On a cold and rainy day at the end of October, I braved the weather for the 45-minute walk from my residence to the university. Lin was my second interview of the day, and we met in the café in the Foundation Building. Lin was 26-years old, the oldest undergraduate that I interviewed as part of this thesis. The Foundation Building housed the departments of humanities and social science, their faculty, postgraduates, and lecture theatres used for many introductory courses. It was also a hub for the wider community because in the lower level it contained the University Concert Hall with seating for 1,000 people, an art gallery and an exhibition space that attracted many city residents to the campus. I met Lin just before her class to talk about her educational experiences.

Photo 15: The Foundation Building, UL.



Source: © The Author, 2008.

Lin had chosen Limerick over other pre-approved exchange semesters for two reasons. In the first place, Lin wanted to increase her proficiency in English. In the second, Limerick offered students from China a master's degree in accounting if they completed one year in Limerick and their undergraduate studies in China. This was an opportunity Lin could not overlook, as having a master's degree from a European country would enable her to also apply for jobs in Europe, and obtain mobility and employment visas, more easily. The only other European destination available to Lin for transfer credit and free-fees was in France, but she would not get a master's degree for the time she spent there and she would have to learn French. Her overall goal was to find a

good job in financial services in Europe, and she felt that Limerick offered her the best chance of achieving this.

In order to gain admission to UL, Lin had to pass an international IELTS (International English Language Testing System) exam, submit transcripts of her previous Chinese courses, a reference letter, a personal statement of why studying in Limerick was important for her future goals, and a résumé. With these documents in place she was approved to study in Limerick for one year. She took courses in financial derivatives, international corporate finance, financial information analysis, business research methods, banking and portfolio management, and would complete a dissertation as part of her studies that contributed to the awarding of a master's degree. Assessment in her courses was comprised of homework, small assignments, and a 50% final exam. Lin found her courses very challenging because she had no previous knowledge of the subjects and it was the first time she had received university education in English. But she felt her English was improving and she was enjoying the programme very much.

In overcoming her linguistic and academic challenges, Lin felt that she had become more open-minded and confident about herself. I asked her if she had any recommendations for other students considering study abroad opportunities and she reported that the learning of a language is the most difficult part of the experience, but that 'you cannot be afraid of making mistakes'. She felt that students needed to be very independent and able to take care of themselves. Lin reported some homesickness at the beginning of her time in Limerick. However, she was very friendly, confident, and optimistic when we met.

Photo 16: The Foundation Building, UL.



Source: © The Author, 2008.

While Lin found her time at the university rewarding and enriching, she was not as optimistic about Ireland itself. The weather had not been what she had imagined and she was tired of the rain and cold. I think everyone I interviewed during that cold semester would share this sentiment. The cold was an ongoing battle, and after concluding my interview with Lin I walked the 45-minutes home in horizontal rain and was soaked to the bone, only to come home to find my apartment freezing. When I complained, the building manager confirmed that there was a problem with the temperature sensor for my energy saving radiator. A handyman came the next day to fix it, but in the meantime I used the oven to cook dinner so that it would also warm up the kitchen.

Lin's *immram* reflects traditionally conceived study abroad programmes. Lin became mobile due to academic aspirations and chose UL because it was the most advantageous. While Lin was focused on international finance, this trend holds true of other professions, including language teachers (Ehrenreich 2006). While she travelled extensively, the majority of our interview was framed around academic

expectations and experiences. Lin's experiences were similar to those of the other foreign language learners (Pearson-Evans 2006; Ayano 2006; Burnett & Gardner 2006) because she was learning not only vocabulary but also emphases, body languages, structures of argumentative discourse, etc. Lin felt that the university provided her with a place to make mistakes without repercussions. Lin was also keen to establish international friendship networks for both personal and professional opportunities in the future based on social activities, such as dinners with flatmates, with whom she hoped to stay connected once she returned to China.

Photo 17: The Foundation Building, UL.



Source: © The Author, 2008.

4.5 Immram of Monika



In contrast to Lin's professional goals, Monika was interested to study abroad for its own sake, to meet new

people and to try new things. Her semester abroad had little impact on her academic requirements because she only had her thesis outstanding. She wanted an opportunity to expand herself personally.

Monika was my second interview of the day. We met in the Library Café before her class. She was a 23-year old ERASMUS student from Poland in her fifth year of social psychology. This was her second application to go on an exchange because she had been refused the previous year for personal reasons. She wanted to spend a semester abroad because she felt that this would be the last chance to be youthful, and the last year of freedom before she was pressured into work. Her first choice of destination had been France but she was not able to finalise the arrangements so she went to Limerick instead.

Photo 18: King John's Castle, Limerick.



Source: © The Author, 2008.

As a fifth year student, her only academic requirement in Poland was the completion of a dissertation. Her course selection in Ireland was therefore not limited to programme requirements. Her favourite course, which was common to most of the international students I interviewed, was in Irish Folklore, but she also took courses in psychology. She found it interesting that her professors used the same names for different contexts and social psychology research that she was familiar with. She did not have any language courses to take, however, which surprised her as she had expected to have to take Irish as well. Academically speaking, this semester was pass/fail for her so she viewed her time in Ireland to be more about the experience itself than the academics.

Monika lived off-campus with some other professionals. I found that it was the European students who obtained local, private rental accommodations, in contrast with the North American students who stayed in student residences on campus. She wanted to move out of this house, however, in order to live with more students. She went to many parties, joined a gym, started swimming, went to dinners and movies with friends, and enjoyed shopping and photography. Monika, while an extensive traveller around Ireland, was the only student I interviewed who had a positive view of Limerick City. In fact, she grew to love Limerick. She felt that it was 'dodgy', but she felt perfectly safe and was impressed with the frequency of rainbows, the easy access to historical ruins, and the spontaneity of the places she visited. She reported that she 'can't grow bored with it!' In fact, every weekend she was on the bus, travelling to the next small village, even if the buses were never on time.

Upon finishing her time in Ireland, she was expecting to submit and defend her thesis in Poland. After this, she was looking forward to a month or two of vacation to travel and relax before starting a PhD. She expected many

friends that she had made in Limerick would be coming to visit her and she offered to travel with them around Eastern Europe. She noted that most speakers of romance languages she befriended, i.e. French, Italian, and Spanish, were afraid to travel alone in Eastern Europe in general, so she looked forward to showing them the 'New Europe'. She felt that traveling in Eastern Europe is 'a safe thing to do, and in a comfortable environment' because it was easy to communicate.

Photo 19: Saint John's Cathedral, Limerick City.



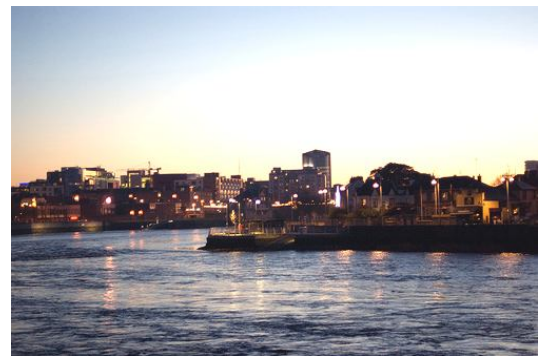
Source: © The Author, 2008.

When I asked Monika to reflect on the experience of studying abroad, she felt that it 'makes you realise that life on your own is really hard'. She thought that 'it is the best thing that you can do' to go outside of your safety zone. That way you experience more reality, get to know yourself better, and through the experience 'prove that you can adapt to new people... but you learn about yourself and others'. Monika strongly advised future students against only mingling with other students from the same country. She recommended that students should meet every one they can while they are abroad because it helps you to learn about yourself, and who you are becoming.

Monika established the largest friendship network of the students whose *immrama* I have collected in this thesis. As an ERASMUS student, she socialised mainly with other European students, who had organised themselves with a dedicated 'Facebook' social networking page. In this respect, Monika was not a traditional foreign-language student as described in the intercultural learning literature. Instead, she was focusing on

social relationships rather than language skills, and developing a group of friends whom she would travel with around Europe after the academic year was over. She referred to the ERASMUS programme as 'ERASMUS orgasmus', further reinforcing this period of international student mobility in terms of social activities rather than academic ones. Monika had designed her time in Ireland to be personal in nature, but for other students professional goals were driving their travel.

Photo 20: The River Shannon, Limerick City.



Source: © The Author, 2008.

4.6 Reflection

I found it beneficial to compare North American students with those from elsewhere in an effort to understand the impact language skills might have on study abroad experiences. For Yeomi, Lin, and Monika, English was a second language. Yeomi and Lin also felt that these language skills were important to their professional development. The international students I have introduced in this chapter were on average older than the North American students who I interviewed. They were also extremely active with other international students who were not necessarily co-nationals. Finally, Ireland provided the best

academic opportunity for these students, and is often conceptualised as a hub for students to both study at an English-language university and also to travel within Europe. If the same structures had been offered in South Africa or Germany, Limerick might not have been a top choice for these students. Yeomi's choices were limited due to visa restrictions while Monika was limited due to the ERASMUS allocation scheme. This context differs from the students that I will introduce in the remainder of this thesis. Given that these students travelled to Ireland for academic and professional opportunities, an appreciation of the travel behaviours of study abroad students provides insight into the outcomes of educational tourism.

Chapter 5 Learning through travel

The boundaries defining and confining acceptable learning break down alongside the breakdown in the legitimacy of canons of knowledge... Learning is occurring increasingly in a multiplicity of sites. In this context, learners cannot any longer be 'kept in their place' in quite the same ways as they have been. (Edwards & Usher 2000)

5.1 *Introduction*

Conventional understandings of study abroad experiences have tended to focus on scholastic activities associated with touristic activities outside of scheduled classroom periods (eg. Carr 2005). As a result, researchers have neglected the activities that students have organised for themselves, outside their institutional and controlled educational settings. The epistemological impact of international sojourns as part of educational and social development continues to be an under-researched field within both tourism and educational studies. While it is convenient to accept Gmelch's (1997) conclusions 'that independent travel in a foreign culture is a catalyst for personal growth in students', the results are not always positive. For example, Brown (2009b) identified that growth in self-confidence, independence, and new gender roles may make it difficult for international students to reintegrate into their homes owing to the cultural expectations of dependence and the interrelatedness of family traditions. The socio-economic and cultural frames of the students at home and in their study destination are crucial in the interpretation of personal development as a positive outcome of educational tourism. In this chapter, I specifically examine the touristic behaviour of my informants in order to identify activities that influence the development of confidence and independence through wandering between cultural frames.

This chapter is divided into four sections. I begin by examining the travel that my informants undertook during their study abroad period in Ireland. I analyse their destinations, their behaviours, and the role friendship plays in organising their touristic

activities in order to contextualise educational tourism patterns. I then compare these experiences with having to act as a *host* to others, and the impact this might have on personal development. Once this has been established, I explore the nature of their travel experiences, and the outcomes that are generated by such activities.

5.2 Student travel

Researchers, such as Brown (2009b: 506), have suggested that the purpose and duration of a trip directly relates to the degree of personal development the tourist might experience when she states that ‘the longer the sojourn, the more embedded the new self can become’. While my informants were in Ireland for a period of at least three months, they also undertook regular two-day excursions away from Ireland as well. While this may have a limited effect on developing multiple intercultural frames of reference, such mobilities would seem to foster the development of intercultural *selves*. In this section, I detail the most popular destinations, travel behaviour, and preferred modes of transportation for North American students in Ireland in order to establish educational tourist behaviour. Data for this chapter are primarily derived from the 27 students who consented to the use of their responses in this thesis, and those who responded to Survey Question 90, which was optional (Appendix 4):

Have you undertaken any travel, in Ireland or abroad? If so, did you travel alone? Where did you go?

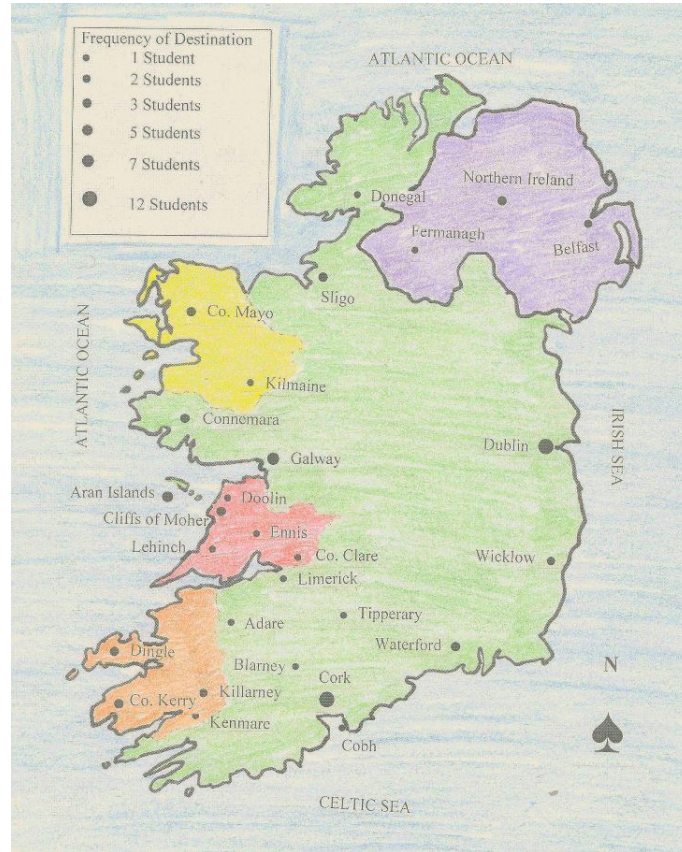
Before I begin my analysis of their responses, however, I should note that this is an open-ended question. Students were free to write as much, or as little, as they wished, to present it in any form they wished, and to reflect on their response before continuing with the next question. This is similar in structure, therefore, to the student diaries that are normally employed in order to assess the development of intercultural competences (Crawshaw *et al.* 2001). The survey responses become texts unto themselves, and can then be used within an intertextual analysis. While the survey responses make up the majority of my analysis in

this chapter, there are clear parallels to the narratives represented in the *immrama* chapters of this thesis as well.

5.3.1 Travel destinations

By far the most popular destinations amongst North American students in Irish universities were within Ireland itself. Map 1 reflects the most popular Irish destinations frequented by students outside of their organised educational activities. It is interesting to note that while Cork and Dublin tie for the most often identified destination, non-specific references to ‘everywhere’, ‘a few other places’ or ‘around’ are recorded 19 times (70%) in the survey responses and would likely include Cork and Dublin as transportation hubs. This result reflects an interest in experiencing as much of Ireland as possible using integrated public transportation systems. For example, the national bus company, Bus Éireann, organises day tours around areas of interest that picked students up on the university campuses, while local tour companies also operated from the city centre. As a result, students may not have known the names of the places they visited, or paid attention, but nevertheless spent time exploring various areas of interest in Ireland. Map 1 cannot account for the paths taken or the lines of travel (Ingold 2007) due to the varied formats students chose to respond to the survey question, some of which were chronological while others mentioned significant sites first. The larger nodes represent those locations where their paths become intertwined into what Ingold (2007) has characterised as knots.

Map 1: Irish destinations of interviewees and respondents



Note: Four regions were identified within Ireland that students referred to simply by their geographic county borders and not with a specific city. 19 students (70%) referred to Ireland generally as ‘Everywhere’, ‘A Few others, or ‘Around’.

Source: © The Author.

European travel was reported in much more specific terms than Irish destinations, however. Students reported a specific city name, usually a national capital, or a country as the destination for their travels away from Ireland. Similar to the influence of the bus schedule for Irish destinations, air connections through two major airlines connected Irish cities to many European destinations. Larsen, Urry, and Axhausen (2006: 10) confirm that this phenomenon is compressing European travel into ‘transnational networks of cheap and accessible playgrounds’. These cities are conceptualised as playgrounds because they are economical, thereby providing a venue for more people to have a social adventure together

in a new place. Cities such as Prague or Barcelona provide a venue for social events such as stag parties, and allow a group of previously organised friends to travel together. In this sense the destination is not as important as the ease of gathering in the same location for a weekend. Larsen *et al.* noted that in some cases it could be easier to organise flights for a group from diverse UK points of origin to such playgrounds rather than trying to coordinate travel within the UK. This behaviour is echoed by my informants, who chose destinations on the grounds of the price of the flight rather than with a particular destination or activity in mind. This unfocused travel does not diminish the intercultural competences students develop, however. These arise from any interaction with a person who does not share the students' frame of reference. Therefore, while travel was crucial in providing an environment for transformative learning, students could learn about the rich differences of cultural frames anywhere, and be shaped by those experiences. This is because transformational learning results from the meeting of practical and immediate needs, where the students must develop skills in situ to manage their affairs. Map 2 represents the popularity of the UK as an English-speaking destination that also potentially holds family connections for students. French and Italian destinations prove to be the most popular after the UK, with students taking weekends to travel to several cities before returning to their universities.

As an example, students who reported going to Italy tended to identify cities such as Rome or Venice, or simply to refer to the country itself:

I travelled in Ireland with my program, and visited England, France, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Italy with friends and family.

Respondent Y (21, Female, USA)

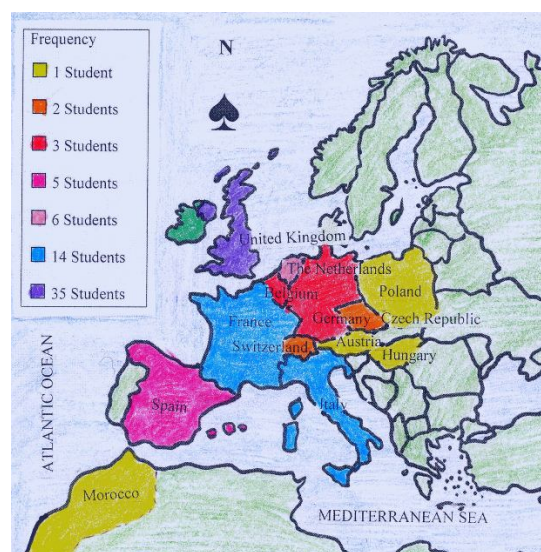
Respondent Y had studied abroad in Ireland in order to develop her own sense of cultural understanding and to travel with friends. She spent her leisure time studying, shopping, watching television, going to the movies, the theatre, museums, and travelling. Although she reported having feelings of isolation when she first arrived in Ireland, she acknowledges a developing intercultural competence when she concludes:

I feel like I have a better understanding of Ireland and Europe, as well as a better understanding of America. I'm much more confident now about travel and being in new situations. I'm less afraid of taking healthy risks.

Respondent Y (21, Female, USA)

A better understanding of Europe and America reflects a sense of intercultural social competence in which students can act as mediators between the two frames of reference. Students also reported increased confidence suggestive of transformative learning because they were able to provide for their immediate and practical needs in a new place while learning from the rich, and sometimes contradictory, traditions, routines, or expectations in new environments. Respondent Y's response is reflective of the experiences of my informants because every student who completed this survey question, or who was interviewed, reported international travel outside of Ireland as their primary non-academic activity. This is consistent with Janes' (2008: 21) analysis of American students in the UK when he states that the experience of studying abroad 'changed their views of Britain, of America and of themselves'. I discuss these changes in Chapter 7. In the remainder of this chapter I examine how student travel patterns were affected by their travel behaviour and the available modes of transportation, and the destinations to which they travelled. It is important to understand these behaviours in order to ascertain the role travel plays in the personal development of students.

Map 2: European destinations of interviewees and respondents



Source: © The Author.

Gmelch observed that his students attended their final class of the week on Thursdays with their packs and their Eurorail passes prepared to go wherever a guidebook or classmate suggested, or with the first available train from the station in Innsbruck. The most popular destinations amongst students were Venice, Florence, Rome, Vienna, Salzburg, Munich, Berlin, Budapest, Prague, Paris, as well as the French and Italian Rivas and more physically demanding destinations in the Swiss Alps. They spent a total of six weeks in Europe and travelled to 5.5 countries, on average, during that time. Students did not spend extended periods of time in these places, however, as their travel diaries reflected an average of 1.72 countries and 2.4 cities per weekend (Gmelch 1997). Gmelch (1997: 478) observed that students 'wanted to see as much of Europe as they could during their time abroad because they were not sure when, if ever, they would come back'. This is consistent with my informants, such as Michael (6.2) who travelled at every opportunity in order to meet musicians in continental Europe. Michael's travel patterns were focused on expanding his professional network, and were therefore not as influenced by economical transportation methods as my other informants. Travelling for professional reasons is inconsistent with Gmelch's findings, and perhaps reflects the postgraduate emphasis on employability while Gmelch's undergraduates hoped to travel to as many different places as possible, without making the same personal connections as Michael did with local musicians.

Gmelch also found that students used travel destinations as a subject of competition, especially amongst male students. For example, 'for many students, getting to know the places they visited mattered far less than being able to say that they had been there' (Gmelch 1997: 478). The students referred to this process as to 'map hop'. My own informants were not so driven. They certainly travelled every weekend, but often this was the result of perceived limited academic responsibilities and an aversion to entering Limerick City rather than as a form of competition. This difference may have resulted because the students in my study were not previously friends and therefore did not have a pre-existing relationship that might foster competition. This result is similar to Cohen's (2003a) study of backpackers whose behaviour he described as 'drifters'. For backpackers, the destination is not as important as wandering from place to place and meeting new

people. Cohen has characterised backpackers in Israel as undergoing a similar transition towards adulthood as my informants when he suggests that 'backpacking may in a sense be a reversal of the ordinary conditions of the youths' life in their society of origin'. This reversal does not facilitate the transition towards *adulthood* in and of itself, but rather provides a liminal time for students to experiment 'owing to legal restrictions, parental and social controls [...] cannot be fully realised at home' (Cohen 2003a: 104). There are similarities, therefore, between the travel study abroad students organised outside of curricular time and the indeterminate wandering of backpackers because they are both organising travels without clear destinations in mind. This suggests that for study abroad students, the experience of meeting new people is more important than 'map hop' competitions with others. More open-ended wandering of study abroad students creates opportunities for transformative learning because students will find themselves in unfamiliar locations and be required to create strategies to interact with new social expectations on demand.

5.2.2 Travel behaviour

Participants in this study overwhelmingly travelled in the company of others. In their responses to Survey Question 90, 19 students (70%) clearly identified that they only travelled with friends, or connected with friends upon their arrival. Only 7 students reported travelling specifically as part of their educational programme on an organised tour. This point suggests that two different forms of educational tourism are reported: student-organised travel and institution-organised travel. Students who travelled as part of an organised tour did not usually travel independently. Certainly, the safety and structure of such programmes enabled participation in international travel for students who might be afraid to travel alone. Gmelch observed that this was the first time abroad for many students, and that 'they were understandably nervous about travelling alone or even in pairs; they found security in numbers' (1997: 480). However, as the students became more confident in their abilities, the size of these groups reduced by one third. The fear of travelling alone may have derived from events in the news, but more likely was the result of inexperience travelling alone. Travelling with friends, therefore, becomes a coping

strategy to protect themselves from unwanted, negative experiences. As students accumulate positive experiences, however, their concerns relating to health and safety diminish. For example, Ryan and Twibell (2000) noted that concerns about safety reduced from 25% of students to 18% by the end of their period abroad. Interestingly, they note that 78% of their respondents appraised their study abroad experiences in terms of challenges rather than threats. Establishing friendships is one coping mechanism students use to mitigate a sense of danger and create more supportive environments for learning. Overcoming such challenging experiences is necessary to get on with everyday life while studying abroad, and therefore creates an environment conducive to transformative learning because students must put their learning immediately into practice, using their best judgement, to overcome those challenges.

Travel with friends also provided a friendship network for students to rely upon while they do not have familial support. For example, Respondent U travelled as part of a university-organised programme:

I was really lucky and went with a professor-sponsored trip. A group of about seventeen of us went together with a professor and his family. We travelled all over Ireland, practically every other week. My favorite trip was a four-day stay in Carraroe with an Irish family.

Respondent U (20, Female, USA)

Such trips are reminiscent of *The Grand Tours* structured by early study abroad programmes that organised international travel from the United States (Section 1.2). Respondent U had studied abroad in order not only to develop her own sense of Irish culture but also to make new friends and experience new teaching methods. She spent her time outside of the classroom shopping, listening to music, participating in social organisations and sporting events, and going to nightclubs. This respondent was very group-oriented and did not generally participate in activities without her friends. She was the only respondent, however, to report participating in formally organised trips by her home institution. Respondent U was the only student in my study who travelled exclusively with university-organised groups. As she was a survey respondent, I was unable to follow-

up with her to determine if this was motivated by a sense of fear or because the trips met with her travel expectations of a study abroad semester in Ireland.

On the other hand, students who travelled independently of education programmes organised themselves in a similar fashion to Gmelch's (1997) students. At first, they travelled to foreign destinations in large groups, which became smaller as the semester progressed and their travel confidence increased. Ultimately, however, only three of my informants reported completely independent travel.

I have travelled alone much of Europe before coming to Ireland. I also travelled by car alone all of the 48 continental States of America.

Respondent J (26, Female, USA)

Certainly, Respondent J's previous travel experiences may have influenced future travel behaviour. Such outcomes suggest that independent travel and self-confidence seem to be related, in contrast to Nash's (1976: 199) findings that 'the hypothesis of increased self-assurance must be rejected'. Respondent J had always been interested in travel, and organised many opportunities for wandering before and during her study abroad period in Ireland. She organised her own travel opportunities, and this attitude is reflective of transformative learning because the student must be motivated by an internal desire in order to create opportunities for social interactions that might reshape her ideas about social roles. She directed her own learning independent of the university, and was focused on learning about the world beyond the classroom. This directed orientation may have been because Respondent J was older than my other informants, having travelled extensively prior to beginning her undergraduate studies. She had wanted to live abroad and make new friends, and moved to Ireland to undertake her degree, and she made the necessary arrangements to do so. It is difficult to assess whether her studies in Ireland were formative in her development of self-confidence due to her extensive travel history outside of Ireland. I had not inquired about previous travel in the survey, however, but Respondent J felt that it was important to contextualise her travel patterns within that context. Her response is similar to Natalie's (Section 8.6), for whom studying in Ireland was not as influential as it had been for my other informants because she had previously studied in Argentina. It is likely that Respondent J experienced a similar diminishing return. Both women continued to travel

after their initial experiences, reflecting a personal interest in trying new things, meeting new people, and by extension accumulating intercultural experiences.

Students develop intercultural competences from the experience of travel itself, such as being able to communicate immediate needs in a new language, how to behave appropriately in social situations, and strategies to facilitate social interactions. Students also learn the logistics of travelling in different tourism frames of reference as well, as each new location presents new challenges to meet everyday needs. Larsen *et al.*'s (2006: 61) 'movement competences' are helpful in articulating the tourist skills study abroad students develop in order to successfully combine their travel goals with intercultural encounters. Movement competences contribute to a deeper understanding of the context in which intercultural competences may develop because they facilitate opportunities for interaction and create immediate needs that must be addressed, a condition of transformative learning. Larsen *et al.* defined 'movement competences' as the ability 'to walk distances within different environments, to board different means of mobility, to carry or move baggage, to read timetabled information, to access computerized information, to arrange and rearrange connections and meetings, the ability to use mobile phones, text messaging, email, the internet, skype, etc. [sic]'. Tourists should be able to easily identify information, methods of communication, and manage resources while travelling as a result. These are the daily challenges that study abroad students must overcome. In so doing, they may establish friendship networks with local residents or with other international students. The act of mobility in relation to others serves to create opportunities for the development of intercultural competences more broadly. This relationship is explored in the following section.

5.2.3 The mutual support of friendship

The process of friend-making amongst international students, and as reported by Respondent U above, is similar in spatial configuration to Course's (2010) conceptualisation of the 'centrifugal person,' where in moving beyond the home and

establishing friendships, a *Mapuche* man can develop himself as a person through establishing connections with others. In both instances, an individual originates from a single space and begins to move farther and farther away from it as they establish and foster friendships. Both the *Mapuche* and study abroad student begin from the familial home. In this case, the study abroad students I interviewed began from their dorm rooms. They had no friends, no family, and no personal connections to anyone with whom they came into contact. Slowly, they began to meet new people who were in similar circumstances, through international student orientations, beginning classes that were predominantly subscribed by international students, and through such online activity as social networking (Section 7.2.3). They thus began to move further from their rooms, meeting new people, and establishing friendships that over time strengthen through travel beyond the scope of the city, around the country, and throughout Europe.

Social Network Analysis (SNA) is concerned to map the links that join people together with other individuals, organisations, social clubs based on shared interests, and so on through communication mediums such as face-to-face communication, the use of mobile telephones, and email (Larsen *et al.* 2006). Students used online social networking tools to locate other students with common interests in order to establish face-to-face interactions. Once this had been established, my informants left their dorm rooms and went to social gatherings at the student pub, as in the case of Monika (Section 4.5) who joined other ERASMUS students every Friday night. With a new friendship network, my informants then began to move away from Limerick and travel across Ireland and Europe in much the same way as Course's 'centrifugal' *Mapuche*. This confirms Larsen *et al.* (2006: 14) observation that SNA 'illustrates how communication and social capital are tied into and dependent upon technological cultures and virtual spaces'. Without these spaces, students would be more preoccupied when they first arrived organising themselves and orienting themselves to the campus, and the city. They would not have had social events organised within the first week, and would have been reliant on meeting students in their courses or through social clubs after the semester had started. Monika, and the other ERASMUS students, were able to create a friendship network prior to arrival using social networking sites, and used this network as their primary social group throughout the semester. While

this served to create an immediate friendship network based on shared circumstances, it also limited their contact with local students. In spite of this limitation, the network created a space for the development of intercultural competences because students from different European countries interacted on a regular basis. The network also limited development by restricting the time available for making these connections with other students from Ireland and around the world. This behaviour limited the social experiences of European students. Personal transformation through interactions with others who had diverse frames of reference was only possible in this context if the student was personally motivated to break away from the group. Other students, such as Teresa (Section 6.5), were unhappy with the friends she made through her living accommodation and purposefully set out to make friends with whom she could share intercultural experiences such as cooking and travelling.

Friendships developed amongst international students are slightly different from those created by domestic, non-mobile students in that they suffer the same physical dislocation from the family centre and must begin again. This may be because friendships made amongst students who live together are stronger than those with course mates (Brooks 2007). This is consistent with my informants' experiences as well: they rarely saw their Irish flatmates on the weekend because most had returned to their familial homes. This served to isolate study abroad students from their Irish counterparts and to motivate them to travel since there was no one available in their flats for interaction. Furnham and Trezise (1983) identified other common problems that international students face on a daily basis that differ from their domestic counterparts. All young adults face difficulties in the transition from adolescence to *adulthood* as they become independent agents with increasing responsibilities. The international student case is more complex as they navigate unfamiliar academic and social settings. Friendship becomes a method to identify resources, exchange emotional support, and exchange ideas. Brooks (2002) has identified that for the most part students develop stable friendships over the course of years that must be managed even in new situations. While Brooks (2002) is concerned primarily with students' choices of universities and moving to new cities, the same can be applied in the context of international student friendships. Students rely upon existing networks for support and encouragement, and incorporate activities with them (whether virtual or

through travel) while at the same time forging new relationships. Zhou *et al.* (2008: 70) have identified this as a multi-cultural friendship network, one in which students 'derive mutual social support and enjoy some social recreational activities' with other students. This type of network is confirmed by Montgomery and McDowell (2009) where they identified a community of practice amongst international students in the United Kingdom that would offer a rich opportunity to establish friendship networks comprised of multiple and diverse cultural frames of reference.

The new friendships that students form as part of their international travels are important to their developing self-confidence and identity as well. Pahl (2000) has suggested that the friendships established as part of higher education and training create a particularly strong bond of friendship amongst students in a relatively short period of time. He states:

The expansion of higher education, especially among women, has greatly increased the opportunity for making friends. A growing proportion of young people in their early twenties who are in high or further education also have the time and opportunity to make friends to match their emerging identities. (Pahl 2000: 171)

These friendship patterns can be both positive and negative. As described by Pahl, students can gain confidence in meeting new people, and formulate new identities in relation to the people they meet while in university. Jordan (2002: 108) notes, however, that students can also 'ghettoise on the ether, conversing not with indigenous people but with people like themselves who are already known to them and situated *outside* the country they are purporting to discover'. The travelling patterns of the students I met, which I have recounted in this chapter, are indicative of both of these patterns. They organised themselves in Ireland in what has been characterised as an 'international bubble' and took this bubble with them as they travelled around Ireland and Europe. These networks were comprised of students from many countries, often based around cohabitation or shared social clubs such as Rose (Section 4.1) and the trampoline club. Rose, along with her club, travelled around Ireland as a group, only meeting other athletes and not local residents. It is up to the student to decide their level of comfort in initiating interactions with local

residents. The more interactions they have, it seems their confidence increases as well (outlined in Chapter 7).

Emerging identities, therefore, result from wandering with friends. For example, Lin (Section 4.4) travelled to Ireland specifically with the intent of establishing a friendship network and obtaining a postgraduate degree that would facilitate her future immigration plans. While this was the underlying motivation for Lin to study in Ireland, she was preoccupied throughout her studies with travel, and each week new photos were posted to her 'Facebook' profile, providing physical proof travel to these destinations. She was rarely alone in these pictures, and while she stated her primary desire to establish a friendship network was to support her employment aspirations, friends were also foundational to her travel behaviours. By travelling with friends, she was able to establish meaningful relationships that she hoped would endure after the semester had finished. She intended to remain in contact with her friends to locate future employment opportunities, to stay abreast of industry developments in different countries, and to highlight China as a desirable destination for work or holiday, inviting me to come and visit her once she had returned to Shanghai. Therefore, universities provide a space in which women can establish relationships that provide mutual support for study abroad students.

5.3 *Tourist or host?*

For my informants, considerable travel is often undertaken independently of the original move. Once abroad, students can choose to explore their local environs that, over time, come to feel less foreign, even becoming familiar. Others choose to travel more broadly as they become acculturated to their academic environs and meet other students who are also interested in travelling. Many students did not identify themselves with the term *tourist* as they spent a significant amount of time in their new locale and acted as hosts when family and friends visited, but they did consider themselves to be tourists once they travelled to further destinations. In addition, if the student had an ancestral connection to the local area, they also tended not to identify themselves as tourists because in the North American context they would normally identify themselves as *Irish*. I found this to be the case in my

pilot study as well (Nielsen 2010), where students of Irish ancestry had preconceived ideas about Irish culture based on family traditions, some of whom were disappointed that modern Irish culture does not reflect family histories. This connection led some students to identify more so with Ireland as an ancestral home than with the US or Canada. This behaviour is consistent with Comp's (2007) heritage-seeking American students, even students from minority communities sought out diasporic connections with communities while abroad. All but three of my survey respondents (89%) reported having friends and family visit them while they were in Ireland. In this section, I explore the transition from *tourist* to *host* as part of the study abroad experience.

In contrast to Gmelch's competitive students, 89% of my informants reported family members or friends visiting them during their time abroad. They participated in such touristic activities as reported above. For example, Respondent S was completing her undergraduate studies in Fine Arts and Humanities at a northeastern United States women's college. She had wanted to live abroad, make new friends, develop her cultural understanding, and travel with friends. Travel certainly became a core activity during her studies in Galway:

Yes, my father helped move me in at the beginning, my mother and brother visited towards the end, and a friend from home and a friend from college both visited me in Ireland. Also, I had a friend from home studying in Dublin, who I saw a couple of times.

Respondent S (21, Female, USA)

Teresa (Section 6.5) reported similar travelling with new friends made in Galway and with her family who came to visit her and rented a cottage and a car. Often having a child studying in Ireland was used as an excuse by parents to travel to Ireland themselves, and it is possible they encouraged their children to choose Ireland as a destination. For example, I overheard one couple who were staying at the same bed and breakfast as I was in Galway, who were proudly recounting to the owner that they had come to Ireland in order to take their daughter, who was studying at NUIG, to the *important* places that had to be experienced first hand. As I established in Teresa's *immram*, however, she travelled to many of the same destinations twice, suggesting that perhaps the parents I met in a local bed and breakfast were using their daughter as an excuse to see those locations for

themselves. Other parents took advantage of business travel to reconnect with their child in Ireland. For example, Respondent V did not travel as much, but was surprised when her mother came to visit:

It was completely unplanned, but my mom came to visit me in Ireland when she was in Paris and got rained out. My friend from home met me in Scotland for a trip there.

Respondent V (22, Female, Canada)

Respondent V was a postgraduate student in criminology from a central Canadian university. She spent one semester in Limerick as a visiting and exchange student and hoped that the experience would improve her career prospects, develop her cultural understanding, and provide an opportunity to study subjects that were unavailable at her home institution. Respondent V did not travel as much as Respondent S, but both provided responses reflective of other students whose parents, cousins, or friends came to visit them. This constant influx of people from home thrusts study abroad students into the role of *host* on a regular basis, and is reflected in the *immrama* of Teresa (Section 6.5) and myself (Section 6.4).

The expectation that students would be able to act as *hosts* to family and friends suggests an expectation on the part of guests that the student both had the time to host them, as well as knowledge of the local area that would be of interest. On the other hand, some parents wanted to show their children an Ireland that they would not have access to in cities that are undergoing modernisation. This suggests two complementary travel patterns for study abroad students. In the first, students are expected to have learned about Ireland, generally through academic courses, and to replicate that information for their guests in a manner similar to Irish coach drivers (Costa 2009). In the second, it is assumed that study abroad students have not been exposed to the pertinent information, often a romanticised version of Ireland created in the North American media, and it is the role of the parent to share this heritage with their child through, for example, heritage centres (Sheerin 1998; Slater 2003). Regardless, students' transition back and forth between the identities of *tourist* and *host*, and this transition helps them to clarify their relationship with Ireland and Irish culture. This can result in transformative learning because the students are required to

respond to immediate needs that they might feel they are unable to meet, and in trying on new social roles can connect to Ireland differently because of their travel experiences.

5.4 Travel experiences

Travel is inherent to the study abroad experience. By understanding their travel patterns as a form of tourism, the world outside of the classroom provides students the opportunity for learning about themselves and their global community by wandering between social and cultural frames of reference. This section is divided into two parts. I begin by discussing the overall patterns resulting from educational tourism. I then describe the impact these experiences have upon their personal development.

Amongst my informants, there was a reliance on organised travel outside of formal academic programmes, through organisations such as clubs, or sports. Cohen's research into young backpackers interrogates a similar age group, from similar countries, seeking similar experiences, but with a complete lack of purposeful planning or organisation in the sense of institutional design. As a result, while Noy and Cohen's backpackers (2005) seek authentic experiences and are open to unplanned activities, educational tourists, such as those I present in this thesis, make plans and tend to rely heavily on the companionship of fellow students in their travels. This may contribute to a sense of having travelled 'everywhere' while at the same time being unable to name those places, as I identified in Section 5.3.1. In this case, however, destinations further away from Ireland were determined through having a friend to visit in the destination, a friend with whom to travel, or an organised activity to draw them to that location, such as a conference or concert. The quick and relatively inexpensive provision of travel by air also prompted many students to undertake unplanned travel, but always in the company of others, in much the same manner as Larsen *et al.*'s (2006) informants who were travelling to 'accessible playgrounds'. This creates European destinations as abstract sites of social interaction with previously established friends, rather than spaces for intercultural interactions. Jordan (2002) also suggests that the destination is not as important for gap year travellers as the ways of moving between those places. She notes that many young people 'snatch whiffs of alterity

as they pass through a vast, practically undifferentiated field of otherness, often barely remembering the names of places they have seen' (Jordan 2002: 108). This approach to travel is represented in my informants responses as well, where 'everywhere' is an important signifier to demonstrate that they have been in a place.

Most students did not have any previous connection in Ireland. However, some students who acknowledged their Irish ancestry contacted distant family members living in Ireland. This is a fundamental provision of heritage tourism, but the authenticity of these experiences was not of paramount concern to my survey respondents. Their comments suggest that while their preconceived understandings of Ireland may have changed, these activities were more experimental in nature, providing new opportunities for learning. For example, when asked to discuss any advice they might have for future students considering studying overseas one student wrote:

It is important to go into the experience with an open mind. Expect things to go wrong, and be ok with them when they do. Europeans are much more relaxed than Americans, so it can be frustrating at first because it takes time to adjust to the different lifestyle paces, but once you do, you will love it. Be open to all new experience, try things that you wouldn't normally do, eat foods in different countries even if they don't sound that appealing, it's all about embracing new cultures. Keep a journal to remember all the little details of your time, you will be grateful to look back on it in later years. Talk to everyone, you can learn amazing things from the stranger standing next to you at the bus stop.

Respondent O (20, Female, USA)

This student's repeated vocabulary of difference is interesting when you consider that she is an American student in Ireland. The Irish have had a significant impact on the historical development of the United States and are still a recognisable and active community (Kenny 2000; Miller 1985). North American students may have adapted to the cultural values of their Irish hosts, but the difficulties in overcoming these differences is not as staggering given a common language as it is for other students who did report encountering racism in Ireland in addition to these difficulties (Boucher n.d.). Both realities must be taken into consideration when assessing the potential outcomes of international education, because as Brown (2008), Shupe (2007), and Ryan and Twibell (2000) have established, students can

also have experiences studying abroad that have negative affects on their safety, their studies, and their sense of *Self*.

Inherent in most educational tourism sojourns, however, is the accommodation of international students as a collective, both in classes and residence halls, as well as providing services such as an international office and societies on campus to develop activities for international students to foster intercultural interactions. Local students are rarely participants in these activities. Collectively, students cook for each other in student residence flats, listen to each other's music, participate in cultural festivals, and take the opportunity to talk to many students from around the world. Students enjoy engagement with other cultures, while still sensing the psychological safety of 'home' whilst in Ireland. These students develop their own networks of association and use them to continue their travels into more culturally different locales throughout their stay abroad in much the same way as Fechter's (2007) transnational expatriate friendship networks in which mobile individuals tend to associate with other co-nationals when they are living abroad for extended periods of time. Together they explore a foreign world around them and begin to imagine themselves as located in, and participating in, that foreign space. Douvan and Adelson (1966: 178, in Brooks 2002: 459) suggest that a characteristic of adult friendships is that they offer those participating a chance for 'a mutual flight from boredom – a pact against isolation'. This would seem consistent with Fetcher's transnational expatriates and my own informants, both of whom are looking to create interesting activities for themselves in the company of others.

Common to all of my respondents is their desire to travel. Motivation is a prerequisite of transformative learning, and while they are passionate about their studies and the impact that their time in Ireland might have, future travelling is an implicit and inspirational activity. Through travel, they explore new cities, meet new people, develop friendships with other international students, and begin to exhibit greater self-confidence in terms of their future careers and leisure activities. In some instances, friendships that originate in the dorm house are deepened through international travel, where mutual trust and perseverance connect students in a way that would not have been possible had they

remained at home. The remainder of this chapter examines the learning outcomes of travel undertaken independently of formal educational activities and discusses how the choice of destinations and friendships affects the performance of educational tourism experienced by international students during their time in Ireland.

5.5 Outcomes of independent travel

Pearce and Foster (2007: 1297) have suggested that the learning derived from travel is 'rich in educational opportunities and generic skill development possibilities'. This is predicated upon a student's ability to meet new people, establish friendship networks, and generate new experiences. The North American students who participated in this study identified difficulties in approaching Irish students in the first place, and suggested that future international students strive to escape the safety and comfort of this 'international bubble' for more intercultural activities. Responses to Survey Question 86 (Do you have any advice for students considering studying overseas?) elicited similar comments:

Do it - and while you're there take in as much as you can. Join clubs and sports, and don't be afraid to stray away from the Americans you came over with.

Respondent L (21, Female, USA)

The biggest piece of advice that I can give is to get involved in activities such as the clubs and societies. Because it is such a big school, it is hard to get out of the international bubble. Attending clubs is a great way to meet Irish students that are studying other subjects that you wouldn't normally come across. True, many of the clubs are comprised of international students, but at least you get a bit of diversity.

Respondent U (20, Female, USA)

It is important to note that the majority of the international students who completed this survey were on short-term exchange programmes, most often for one semester or less. The time required to feel secure and sufficiently confident to explore Ireland away from organised school activities prohibits this being easily accomplished. Clubs, sports, and societies offer quick solutions to the problem of meeting local students and building friendships (Lacina 2002). This is important because sometimes even courses and

accommodations might be exclusively international in their composition. These friendships, with both local and international students, allow for authentic intercultural experiences with students from around the world that cannot be organised in a systematic fashion by higher education institutions. Many of these societies offer organised travel as well, so students can explore Ireland in the safety of companions whether known previously or strangers in the same predicament, while they establish friendships. They can also make future travel plans to the homes of Irish students throughout the country, and with international students with whom they can travel to Europe.

When I asked students to discuss the overall experience of their studies in Ireland, not in terms of academics but rather as life experiences, overwhelmingly students responded that their lives had been changed in fundamental ways, as I outline in Chapter 7. They had moved into Cohen's (1979) experimental and existential states of educational tourism. Two participants identified that they had met their current husbands and new families from this opportunity to study in Ireland, committing to an international perspective as they build new lives for themselves across the Atlantic Ocean. Many more, however, reflected on their time in Ireland and viewed it as a watershed for developing self-confidence and personal autonomy. Common themes emerged that confirmed findings of *growth, learning, confidence, independence, self-reliance, discovery, self-sufficiency, and experience*. These responses indicate that institutionally-organised educational tourism offers North American students the opportunity to engage in activities that they might otherwise find overwhelming or distressing through the provision of structure and supervision within a travel experience. The safety of the university has been theorised by Williams (2001: 23) who noted 'a university education might offer a safe space and concerted time for students to imagine other prospects for their lives [...] and to envision a different world they might choose to enter'. It is impossible for all travel to be safe, however, just as I found myself homeless for a night in Tampere and Rose dislocated her shoulder while doing gymnastics (Chapter 4). Therefore, I would argue that while educational tourism is the consumption of education abroad through programmes providing a recognised and seemingly safe space, it is the experiences that students organise themselves, outside of the classroom and the safety of the university, which have the greatest impact on them in terms of personal development

and intercultural learning. These peer-interactions allow students to consider alternative social models not as theoretical possibilities but rather as lived experiences through the eyes of those who are familiar with communism, apartheid, dictatorship, and democracy first hand. This is consistent with Hey's (1997) study of girls' friendships, where in interacting with each other and trying new things the girls came to distinguish themselves in comparison to each other, rather than trying to foster similarities. Studying abroad, and trying new things in the company of friends, allowed students such as Elizabeth (Section 8.4) to foster a sense of independence, confidence, self-reliance, and self-discovery. This is true of friendships with co-nationals as well as with local residents encountered while abroad.

Students now felt a sense of self-reliance that they did not believe possible beforehand, where they learned about themselves, their preconceived ideas about the world, and what they are capable of accomplishing without outside support. This process of self-discovery is the greatest effect of educational tourism, and is brought about largely outside of the formal, academic environment. In the virtual spaces of social networking or the confines of the university lecture theatre, students can find a safe space in which to identify other people who share common interests. They can organise themselves into a travel unit, creating safe spaces in the wider world by relying on the friendship networks they have previously established. Their perceived easier course load than they might have had at home and their weekends were free, so they were able to pursue local travel and travel around Europe. It is precisely through the interaction with the *other*, whether they are students or local residents, that offer initial challenges for students to overcome. The development of self-confidence after persevering in spite of these adversities, independent of familiar support structures and without the linguistic ability to communicate orally, provides the student with a heightened sense of accomplishment.

5.6 Conclusion

I demonstrate in this chapter that the students I met during my fieldwork were very interested in travel, and travelled around both Ireland and Europe. In relation to the potential for intercultural learning resulting from these activities, by travelling with other international students, North American students did not have the same opportunities for linguistic experiences because English was spoken. In fact, their travel became ‘detached from language’ (Phipps & Gonzalez 2004: 57). My examination of their travel activities demonstrated that even without the challenges of overcoming linguistic difficulties North American students still developed intercultural competences, suggesting that travel itself contributes to intercultural competence and that unfamiliarity with a linguistic environment is not required. Further analyses are required to determine the degree to which this is true and the implications this has for study abroad students who are not specialising in modern languages. These experiences lead to self-confidence if challenges can be overcome, and allow a space for students to develop themselves, creating *adult* identities in relation to others; they can survive independently but also see the merit in cooperation and empathy.

Overall, study abroad opportunities afforded by educational tourism foster this experience. The students in this study are in the process of completing their studies, identifying new careers, and learning new leisure activities. The friendships they have made while they were in Ireland create a network of contacts from around the world upon which they can draw for assistance in the future. In her follow-up study, Brooks found that after completing almost three years of their undergraduate degrees away from home, students had become more confident in their own identity as adults and in their ability to be self-reliant. She suggests that ‘they had learnt more about themselves, other cultures and the world generally, by studying and, in most cases, living, alongside others from very different backgrounds’ (Brooks 2007: 698). The duration of wandering does not seem to be as significant as simply wandering itself. In the following chapters, I examine the personal experiences of travel for study abroad students.

Chapter 6 Wandering

6.1 Professional wandering



For North American students, studying abroad can be motivated by both professional and personal aspirations.

Such commitments often converge in time and place, as it did for me in the weeks before I began my formal fieldwork in Ireland. I spent the summer writing a paper that I presented at the European Association of Social Anthropologists 2008 conference. I was looking forward to visiting Ljubljana not only for the holiday but also to meet the chair of my conference session, who was also an anthropologist of education. I packed my bags and traversed London's Underground to arrive at the airport. After smooth sailing through security, I was surprised to hear 'Hi Kate' as my supervisor came up behind me while I was waiting for the airport shuttle to take me to my gate.

I had never imagined how successful the trip would be from a professional point of view. I was simply

excited to be presenting my paper and exploring a new place. Well, I was also looking for some new stamps in my passport and found it strange that the name of my destination on my boarding pass and the stamps in my passport did not match. Serendipity has a way of changing your perspective, and while waiting at the gate to begin my adventure, my supervisor took the opportunity to introduce me to the editor of *Anthropology Today*. After talking to the editor for the 1.5 hour flight, he asked me to write a review of the conference (Nielsen 2008a), a very unexpected surprise. Similarly, I met my Danish supervisor at the conference as well, so professionally speaking I could not have asked for more!

While the trip itself proved to be professionally worthwhile, it also remains vivid in my memory, especially the *Zmajski Most*. I have always been drawn to dragons, perhaps because of my years in Scouting for whom St George the Dragonslayer is the patron saint. Similarly, Ljubljana has a similar tradition with dragons, in which Jason (of Jason and the Argonauts fame) was also

said to have killed a dragon in the city (McKelvie & McKelvie 2005: 6). I was sharing a room with three people also presenting at the conference, and I suspect the entire city's hotels were bursting with anthropologists. Once all of my professional commitments were completed, I took the river boat cruise to explore the city. This was certainly a different perspective from the conference reception that had been held at the *Ljublijanski Grad* (Ljubljana Castle) that overlooked the city centre and was visible whenever you looked up while walking. The river route was the best way to navigate around the city and see its features close up.

Photo 21: Zmajski Most, Ljubljana.



Source: © The Author, 2008.

As a doctoral student, travel became a constant professional necessity. By travelling for fieldwork, I was able to collect data for my thesis. By travelling for conferences, I was able to make personal connections with potential supervisors and journal editors. By travelling for myself, I explored more of Europe and created a vivid personal memory of a city and its dragons. In the remainder of this chapter, I want to introduce Michael and Carolyn, two students that I interviewed during my fieldwork who were similarly connecting professional goals with travel, which they viewed as a necessity to reach their professional aspirations.

Photo 22: Manhole cover from Ljubljana.



Source: © The Author, 2008.

6.2 Immram of Michael



I met Michael outside the River Café in the Millstream Courtyard Building on campus on a late November morning. The River

Shannon divides the UL campus and this café was located on the Millstream River, which connects to the River Shannon, and provides a view of the river area. This was a quiet café that could be very busy at lunch times, but this was early in the day and it was still quiet enough to have an interview. This was my favourite café on campus, and I often went there by myself, but I did not usually suggest it as a location for interviews because in my experience most students were unfamiliar with this part of campus and with the other half of the campus across the river in County Clare.

Photo 23: County Clare campus, UL.



Source: © The Author, 2008.

At 23, Michael, had completed his undergraduate degree from a university in central Canada, and had decided to complete his master's degree in Limerick on the recommendation of a Canadian professor. He had not thought of Ireland as a world destination for musicians, but the programme was highly recommended and so Michael decided to apply. He had hoped to develop his career as a professional musician, to experience Irish culture, and to travel through Europe. Michael's first choice had been to complete a Master's degree in the US or Germany, but Ireland was acceptable to due to its proximity to continental Europe. He held a British passport through his father and this gave him many options for choosing a destination for his studies. He had been to Ireland previously, and had really enjoyed it. However, his time in Limerick as an international student was not what he had hoped for.

As an aspiring musician, Michael had wanted an interactive music environment in which to learn. He had wanted to work in groups, participate in orchestras, meet new musicians, and develop his own talents as part of an

active cohort of collaborative musicians. Limerick was a lonely place for Michael, unfortunately. Almost all of the students and faculty were foreign and did not live in Ireland. Instead, they commuted to Limerick from Italy or France, for classes that were sometimes only held once a month. In the event of inclement weather, such as in January when snow closed all Irish airports (also delaying my return to Ireland after the Christmas break), several of Michael's classes were cancelled because the faculty could not travel to Ireland and the classes were not rescheduled.

The three students who were living in Limerick did not have the benefit of learning from and building personal connections with their peers and teachers because there was a lack of communal space for the students to meet in and practice. Unfortunately, Michael did not register for the Irish Studies course that most of the international students at the undergraduate level were required to take as there was a music component and Jennifer (Section 8.2) reported that she had been tormenting her flatmates with her practicing of the tin whistle.

It was only through travel that Michael mitigated this sense of isolation

and developed his career. He began to travel throughout continental Europe, playing with local orchestras independent of the university programme in which he was enrolled. He travelled throughout Germany, and had been invited to return to Amsterdam in early December to play in a local concert. It was because of this unplanned travelling that Michael began to find the inspiration and personal connections he had hoped to find in Ireland. In fact, he estimated that he would have to take a second master's degree to make up for the programming he viewed as missing in comparison to Canadian and continental European music programmes. He felt the programme required less work of him, with only a project and a one-hour recital expected of him as part of his classes. Michael identified Germany as his ideal next destination because he considered the standard of playing music to be higher. I continued to run into Michael throughout the year as I went about my fieldwork, and this impression of his programme never improved. Travelling enhanced his sense of connection in comparison to his musical activities in Ireland and also provided opportunities

to further his career once he finished his programme in Limerick.

Photo 24: New Castle ruins, Castletroy, just off UL campus.



Source: © The Author, 2008.

While both Lin (Section 4.4) and Michael had come to Limerick to expand their professional opportunities, Michael felt that he had wasted his time and would have to start over. Certainly, the experience he developed and relationships he cultivated independently and opportunistically from the programme would help him develop as a musician in the future. These friendships in continental Europe should serve to

connect him with musical communities as he develops his talents. He felt very disconnected from others during his time in Ireland. He became a travelling musician just like his teachers and fellow students. As a result, Michael's friendship networks were not focused on other co-nationals (such as his fiancé who was also studying abroad in Ireland), but with European musicians he met while wandering the continent. He did not forge meaningful friendships with Irish students. Ultimately, he felt that his Irish educational experience disadvantaged him for future musical training. Michael was the only student I met who reported such a discontinuity between what they had hoped to do while studying abroad and their overall experience of their time in Ireland. Plans can change at a moment, and Michael took advantage of every opportunity he could. Other students who were interested in professional development, such as Carolyn who I will introduce in the next section, were initially interested in professional development, but their personal interest in Ireland became more important than their professional aspirations.

6.3 Immram of Carolyn



Carolyn was an engineering student, who had hoped to work in Ireland to develop her professional identity through an internship. She was ultimately unable to do so, but travelling to Ireland remained important for her, and rather than looking for a placement elsewhere, she chose to apply for a more traditional study abroad semester in Ireland instead.

Photo 25: Poul nabrone dolmen.



The Burren, County Galway. A popular destination.

Source: © The Author, 2008.

Carolyn was a 21-year old electrical engineering student from a state university in the north-eastern United States that I met in the Foundation

Café in early November. She was my second interview of the day, and an energetic and focused young woman. She was ahead in her curricular courses at her home institution and could have graduated a year early. She wanted to work abroad, however, and decided to complete the normal number of semesters for graduation but complete her electives semester while abroad. She completed five courses while in Limerick, three in her field of engineering and one each from linguistics and history to complete her elective courses. As an engineering student, Carolyn was unusual in that she had no risk to her graduation from studying abroad because of non-recognition of completed coursework.

While this semester posed little academic risk to her graduation plans, it had not been her first choice of extra-curricular activities. Carolyn had hoped, originally, to complete a co-operative semester abroad, gaining not only the intercultural experience that a study-abroad semester offered, but also obtain professional development and career contacts for prospective employment in the future. The corporation offering such experiences discontinued their participation, and as result, Carolyn had

found herself in Limerick City, choosing electives. Ireland had been a prospective destination for Carolyn because of the opportunity it presented for travel within Europe. She had several options of English-language exchange, but felt that 'England would have been boring and too expensive'. She was not satisfied with a linguistically similar opportunity, and requested to pursue a course in Irish for foreigners, but it unfortunately did not fit into her timetable.

Cultural experience was vital, in Carolyn's mind, and she sought to travel to continental Europe as frequently as possible. When I asked her if she would recommend studying abroad she commented that she did not believe that everyone should do so. If they did, they should go to countries in continental Europe if they could because there were more opportunities to learn about other cultures, to travel, and to meet new people: 'Ireland is a bit isolated' she said.

Photo 26: Rome, a popular European destination.



Source: © The Author, 2011.

In respect to her impressions of her learning outcomes, Carolyn considered the courses at her Irish university to be easier than those at her home university mainly because there was less work expected of her outside of class. She had no midterms, no lab reports to write, no papers to submit in any of her classes. In contrast to her American university, the courses in which she was enrolled were assessed by a 100% final exam. Students were expected to be much more independent and self-directed in Ireland. The perceived difference in methods and variance of modes of assessment contributed to the difficulties engineering students have in incorporating a short-term period of international education with their undergraduate degrees,

whether they are from Ireland or North America. From Carolyn's point of view, the international experience itself contributed to her future employability, not the courses she was taking while in Ireland. This mitigated her academic risks and maximised her professional identity upon graduation as an internationally experienced engineer.

It is interesting to note that students in my study often interpreted the absence of complimentary, ongoing modes of assessment as suggesting that the education they were obtaining was not of equal value when compared with the American universities with which they were familiar. This may reflect a cultural bias in that students believe they know which teaching methods and assessments are the most effective in achieving the learning outcomes. In this case, Carolyn believed that the continuous assessment with which she was familiar was in some way superior to the Irish model; however, her attitude reflected a dependent type of relationship between student and instructor. The absence of continuous evaluative reassurance left Carolyn unsure of her success throughout the course. Student desire for feedback and

cumulative term evaluations that contributed to the overall grade in the course betrays a desire for more interactions with their professors. Carolyn felt that she did not receive sufficient interaction before a cumulative final exam written at the end of the course and marked after she had returned home. This difference in assessment practice suggests that the student is responsible for their own learning, but in this case, Carolyn would have preferred the professor to be somewhat more approachable and regularly check to confirm that students are learning the material and will be successful overall in the course.

Photo 27: Dublin lamppost.



Source: © The Author, 2009.

6.4 *Hosting family and friends*



In talking with my informants, I realised that as we spent more time in Ireland, we transitioned from *tourist* to *host*

when we guided family and friends who came for a visit and to tour the region. Indeed, my most extensive explorations of Limerick City were with the only friend who came to visit during my fieldwork. Many friends from my home institution in the UK said that they wanted to come over and visit throughout the year, but he was the only one to make the journey from the UK. On his visit, near the end of November, we spent the day exploring Limerick City by foot. We first visited the Hunt Museum for a hot chocolate at the restaurant along the banks of the Shannon River. This restaurant had been recommended by one of my local informants as the best place to get a view of the river while having something warm to drink. And we needed a warm drink to be sure, as the walk from

my apartment in Rhebogue to the city centre took twenty minutes in a light rain. Once sufficiently warmed, we made a quick tour of the gift shop where I was finally able to find a unique architecturally-themed blank card for my father that I had been searching for. We crossed Bridge Street onto King's Island and explored King John's Castle from the outside as it had already closed for the day.

Now dark, we proceeded to retrace a similar route to my apartment in the hopes of finding some dinner along the way. We did not find any open restaurants, and proceeded home to cook our meal instead.

Photo 28: The Author at King John's Castle, Limerick City.



Source: © The Author, 2008.

The following day we walked in the other direction, into the western sections of Limerick City centre, visiting the People's Park before walking along O'Connell Street and into a local restaurant for more hot chocolate and to dodge the rain, which had just started. Once the rain had passed, we began to walk towards my apartment, taking a road we had never taken before. In the end we felt like a pint in a *local* Irish pub but had some difficulties in finding one as we seemed to have wandered into a more industrial area. We finally found one, which we were sure was closed because all the windows were dark, but there was a sign outside the door saying that they were serving Sunday roast so we tried the door and much to our surprise it opened. As we entered, everyone turned their heads to look at us and silence filled the room. Every head turned. I was suddenly extremely uncomfortable and a bit worried because a local resident had cautioned me about going into local pubs alone because some of them were for Catholics and others for Protestants, and that it might be dangerous. My friend seemed oblivious to this and he proceeded to the bar to order a genuine Guinness (he was in Ireland after all) and

to inquire about the food. The publican informed us that the kitchen had closed, but we stayed for a few pints nonetheless. The publican unfortunately had some trouble understanding our accents, especially over the volume of the football match that everyone had returned to watching, and a patron began translating our English into 'Limerick English' for us. We settled into a table in the corner and continued our conversation. I examined our new environs and continued to be a bit uncomfortable because I then noted that I was the only woman in the pub. Nevertheless, the patrons had all gone back to watching their football match and my anxiety level declined.

Periodically, the patron who had helped us to translate our drink orders would go to the toilet and talk to us on his way back to the bar. He wanted to know where we were from, how old we were, and what had brought us to his local pub, which was about a 40-minute walk away from the tourist area. He was very amusing and shared his travel stories with us before returning to his friends and starting this cycle again. Once the match had ended, I was relieved when the wives and girlfriends of the men joined them in

the pub, more than doubling its occupancy. Our new friend continued to return to our table several more times, and it became clear he was collecting information from us and then sharing this information with his companions at the bar. We were the tourist attraction and everybody was curious. My friend and I were also learning about each other from our unusual interactions with this mysterious pharmacist we randomly encountered in a pub.

In this example, I was a *host* for my guest. Although we went to places in Limerick I had never been before, it was my responsibility to make connections, point out places of interest, make plans for travelling with maps, and attempt to arrive at relevant destinations at their appropriate times, such as a pub for dinner. I was unable to coordinate this synchronicity, but my guest did not seem to mind. We did not participate in any organised activities, did not enter any museum exhibitions, etc. Consequently, our knowledge of Limerick City's history did not increase. However, our explorations of the city allowed us to move beyond the gentrified city centre and away from touristic areas to locate a small pub in which we met local residents

eager to talk to us. Several informants experienced these two types of experiences, being both the *tourist* and the *host* of other tourists, as well. For them, parents and siblings came to visit. The tours that they organised as hosts took students to new places in Ireland and offered different experiences. Teresa combined local tours with friends and travelling with her family. Teresa's *immram* highlights the transition that students underwent from *tourist* to *host*.

Photo 29: Manhole cover in Limerick City.



Source: © The Author, 2009.

6.5 Immram of Teresa



As part of my own travelling, I conducted interviews whenever possible at other universities in order to ensure that

my interview results were indicative of the Irish experience in general. For example, when I travelled to Galway City for a conference, I tried to set up interviews while I was there ahead of time, and once again used 'Facebook' as a network to identify American and Canadian students. Of course, given the limited number of days I was in the city I was unable to meet with all students who were interested in participating in interviews. Teresa answered my interview questions in writing because we were unable to meet in person due to scheduling conflicts, so while I took an organised tour around County Galway, Teresa e-mailed me her responses to my open questions in relation to my research project. This is probably why I was able to obtain greater detail about her travel practices than with either my survey or interviews. Certainly, this offered Teresa an opportunity to self-edit her responses,

but in comparing them with the *immrama* of other students and with my own experiences, she was typical in many ways. Consequently, Teresa crafted very articulated responses to my questions about her travel habits.

Photo 30: Connemara, County Galway.



A popular tourist destination.

Source: © The Author, 2008.

While studying abroad was not a mandatory component of her programme, as a student in International Development and Globalisation Teresa felt that it was important to complement her degree because it was inherently international in nature. This was the final semester of her undergraduate programme and she was about to complete her programme of study three weeks after replying to my request for an interview. She knew that

she had completed 30 ECTS, credits equivalent to one full semester in Canada that enabled her to graduate with her class. Teresa was unwilling to take academic risks that might jeopardise her graduation, however. For example, the choice of destination was difficult for Teresa:

I knew that I wanted to go on exchange somewhere. Unfortunately, my language skills are not strong enough to complete a semester in any non-English speaking country; I didn't want to go to England because that seemed too cliché. My first choice was actually Australia, but the semesters there do not line up appropriately with Canada, and since I had my final work term internship until the end of August, I decided to come to Galway. This is the only school in Ireland that has a working partnership with my home university. And of course, after checking out some information about Galway and NUIG, it seemed okay, so here I am!

As we can see in this quote, Teresa was acutely aware of her graduation requirements and she forewent her first choice in order to stay in synchronisation with North American academic calendars. The rejection of England as a

destination of study was common to many of my interviewees (such as Yeomi Section 4.3), as was the limitation to one Irish university choice that was approved for study abroad periods.

Teresa was in the final year of her degree when she began her studies in Ireland. When asked directly how this experience had affected her she said:

I think you can learn from all experiences but most especially the ones where you are forced to start fresh and build entirely new networks. I have learned that I'm good at making friends, but not only that, good at making good friends and building lasting relationships. Living in Ireland was not such a great culture shock for me as a Canadian but it was definitely a challenge to come over here, meet new friends, work in a new university, with new professors and students, and making sure to balance my school time with playtime which I think I did quite well.

These characterisations resemble the intercultural learning outcomes outlined in Section 3.4.

Teresa's travel experiences can be separated into two themes, those with friends and those with family. Teresa did not know anyone when she arrived, and

she had pre-arranged her accommodation before her arrival, so she was sharing a room with another student. She was not very happy about this, but she had been anxious to have a prepared accommodation prior to her arrival and this was the only available option she had found (just as I had, Section 9.4.4). She began to go out and joined a few clubs in order to make some friends beyond her flatmates:

I joined a couple clubs, but only went to them periodically. There were a few special speaker events that I went to, organized by the Law Society and the Lit and Deb society. I also went to a couple outings of the Food and Drink Society, which was delicious.

After attending these events, she had identified other students with whom she might share experiences and interests and she began to organise local activities in Galway with them. For example:

I spent a lot of time just drinking tea or having dinner parties, or pancake breakfasts with our new group of friends. Going to the city centre to explore and shop and go to the pubs/clubs.

These activities allowed Teresa to make some new friends in Galway who had

similar interests to her and with whom to explore Galway City safely. With a broader friendship base, Teresa began to travel beyond Galway with them:

I spent my time with new friends, exploring Galway and nearby. We did a few day trips (Connemara, Cliffs of Moher and the Burren, Aran Islands) and also spent a lot of time at the Promenade in Salt Hill, exploring the shoreline there.

Photo 31: Doolin, County Clare.



A popular tourist destination.

Source: © The Author, 2008.

With her family, however, Teresa's travel patterns changed. She did travel to many of the same destinations with her friends, but had choices of where to stop because her family had rented a car. They were not forced through confinement on a

small bus to meet new people, or to travel according to a schedule.

My parents came over with my two youngest sisters for 12 days. They rented a cottage in County Clare, and with them (and the rented car!) we went to Bunratty Castle, the Dingle Peninsula, Dublin again, Lough Derg tour, the Burren again, Aran Islands again.

Teresa was unique amongst my informants, however, in that she had not travelled outside of Ireland. She was my only informant who was focusing exclusively on Ireland, but this may have been the result of her future travel plans in Europe. Upon the completion of her semester abroad, her undergraduate degree would be complete.

Since I graduate at the end of the semester, I am staying in Europe to do some travelling (Denmark, Germany, England) before heading to the Netherlands for an au pair position (because I don't want to make those 'real-life' decisions that come after the undergrad).

Friendships in Ireland constituted the majority of travel companions for international students. For example, friends were important to Teresa:

I've made some great friends while I'm here. Some I live with, some I met randomly at

the orientation at the beginning of the semester; some were tag-alongs when a group of us went out. I know that I won't keep in touch with everyone I've befriended here, but there are a few very special people that will always be part of my life. What I will remember the most about Galway are the friends I made. One other note on friends, I did feel though that about midway through the second month, it was really difficult to make any new friends. Everyone had their own little groups, and maybe you would chat with someone here and there in class, or at an event, but definitely that sense of wanting to make good friends fast died out. And that makes me a little sad, because it seems like there are so many great people that I didn't get to meet.

Photo 32: Kylemore Abbey, County Galway.



A popular tourist destination.

Source: © The Author, 2008.

6.6 Reflection

Whether wandering for professional or personal reasons, friendships often created the foundation of touristic behaviours. The students I spoke with, and who completed the survey, reported that their travel activities were undertaken with friends, either as a *tourist* or as a *host*. Touristic activities, going to new places for example, were usually done with either old friends/family or with new friends from the university who shared their study abroad experience. This form of travel was rarely done in the company of Irish nationals. When Irish nationals were present, often travel centred upon going to their family home for a weekend rather than to a new place. For example, buses were a cheap and efficient way to travel around Ireland, whereas the use of rental cars tended to be reserved for parental visits. Whether travelling in Ireland or around continental Europe, friends provided safety, companionship, and a larger pool of common knowledge. For example, Monika (Section 4.5) wanted to act as a guide for fellow international students around Eastern Europe and Teresa was a host/guide for her family. These identities can be simultaneous, and often conflicting at

times (Guest et al. 2006). For example, Respondent Q identified several configurations in that she was both the host and the tourist:

I went to Cork with a group
of friends
England with everyone from
my program
Cheltenham to visit a friend
Italy with my best friend from
home
Edinburgh and Spain with my
roommate
Dingle, Kenmare, Cork, and
Dublin with mom and brother
Dublin with another friend
from home

Respondent Q (20, Female, USA)

As we can see in her organisation of her travel destinations in a list form, Respondent Q never travelled alone, and combined new friends with older and familial connections as she travelled around Ireland and Europe. She travelled extensively, but notes travelling to Cork and Dublin twice.

However, due to their extended time in Ireland, most students did not consider themselves to be *tourists*. This is consistent with my findings in my pilot project in Belfast (Nielsen 2010), as well as Costa's distinctions made by non-students in Dublin:

Some people aren't tourists,
just travellers. Like I would
say students who are away

studying at school aren't tourists, like the ones from the States we met at Trinity [College] this morning. (Claire, age 44, quoted in Costa 2003: 184)

The difficulty in self-identification is located in the fact that individuals can hold multiple identities simultaneously, and can shift between them due to external circumstances. This transition is similar to the one in which students are becoming adults. This sense of place and confidence in oneself develops over time, and oscillates depending on circumstances and social relationships. Students become more confident in their knowledge of Ireland, their interactions with other students, local residents in the places they travelled, and their ability to show their new knowledge to their friends and family from home. Their transition to *host* also parallels their transition to *adult* in the sense that hosting guests can be understood to be the activity of an established *adult*. In this *immram*, I have demonstrated that my informants experienced multiple forms of tourism-related behaviours and identities, and clearly labelling one activity touristic while another educational is difficult.

The students I interviewed experienced formal classrooms, fieldtrips

with clubs, as well as planning their own travels based on seat sales, and hosting friends and family. Obviously, these things do not all happen at once. One factor can suddenly overtake the others, a sale on air travel, an impromptu visit from a parent travelling on business, an invitation to join an orchestra, or a class requirement. Friendship networks determined destinations, frequency of trips, and a social group with which to enjoy each other's company. The transition between the two identities was not always smooth, especially when academic work had to be balanced with activities that offer the potential for deeper intercultural learning that will not be recognised for academic credit. Indeed, independent travel to museums offered equal if not deeper information about Ireland than a 50-minute lecture that might not be attended at all. The degree to which this is true is dependent on the disposition of the student and, therefore, the intercultural learning accumulated through touristic activities varied amongst my informants. In the following chapter, I will examine how multiple forms of tourism contribute to personal development.

Chapter 7 Personal development through travel

Negotiating a significant transition in life, leaving home, getting a new job, [...] forming a new relationship, moving between different areas or routines, confronting illness, [...] all mean running consciously entertained risks in order to grasp the new opportunities which personal crises open up.
(Giddens 1991: 79)

7.1 Introduction

Significant passages from one stage of life to another, such as from *child* to *adult* represent opportunities to learn about one's self-confidence, intercultural values, and aspirations. Giddens suggests that these *passages* are challenges in which modern individuals 'are drawn into, and surmounted by means of, the reflexively mobilised trajectory of self-actualisation' (1991: 79). My discussion in this chapter focuses on the development of confidence, independence, and autonomy in relation to female international students, who make up the majority of international students who studied in Ireland during the 2008/9 academic year (Table 4). This chapter examines the real and perceived risks of female study abroad opportunities. My discussion begins with the development of self-confidence as an outcome of international education. I then reflect on how these risks might act upon the development of these students into *adults* as they wander between intercultural spaces.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section outlines the theoretical and evidential basis of my discussion of the personal development arising from independent travel activities, and how these activities relate to students becoming independent *adults*. In the second section, I explore the inherent risks of the study abroad experience; how students experience academic risk, travel risks, and online risks, and how they manage those risks. These challenges provide students with new experiences, and I argue that if those risks are overcome, they simultaneously provide the opportunities for personal development and transformative learning. In the final section, I examine the personal experiences of students through an analysis of survey responses in terms of the success or failure of international experiences to enable intercultural and transformative learning.

7.2 *Risk in studying abroad*

Risk can be an important vehicle for self-discovery. In their analysis of how Norwegian youth learned about drinking responsibly, Dobson, Brudalen, and Tobiassen (2006: 57) suggested that ‘in courting risk, youth are able to experience a kind of learning rooted in a self-overcoming of their normal sense and experience of self’. In effect, study abroad students get on with the business of daily life with familiar tools, learning from the experiences of peers, and exploring new institutional, local, national, and international contexts in their activities outside the formal provision of courses by taking risks. Internationally mobile students face three major risks when participating in study abroad programmes: academic risks, risks associated with travel, and online risks.

7.2.1 Academic risk

Academic risks exist prior to and upon completion of a period of study spent abroad. Would the home institution recognise courses or credentials? Many informants, especially in business, science, or engineering programmes, identify limited destination choices in contrast to students in the humanities and social sciences. Toncar and Cudmore (2000) and Litvin (2003) have documented how student tourism can be beneficial to business students while Guest, Livett, and Stone (2006) explored how natural sciences students can also benefit from international educational experiences.

Henry and Irene, both 23 years old, reported that if relevant and transferable maths or engineering courses that met specific academic requirements had not been available, they would not have participated in the first place, reflecting the difficulties students face when incorporating studying abroad into highly regimented academic programmes (DiBiasio & Mello 2004; Klahr & Ratti 2000). For my informants, UL was often the only university in Europe that offered English-language and transferable engineering, maths, or kinesiology programmes. As fourth-year undergraduate students from a mid-western American university who were engaged to be married, Henry and Irene were acutely aware

of their limited programme choices and the risks they faced by trying to incorporate a semester abroad. Originally, they had been permitted to study for a semester abroad because UL had an established and reputable engineering programme that was taught in English. However, the university did not make their course documents available online or send them to institutions with which they have exchange agreements. Instead, it was up to the students, after their arrival and classes had started, to find appropriate courses, obtain the course documents for these courses, and send course descriptions to their home institution for approval. Their home institution required a significant amount of course information that was not available prior to the students' departure and they were frustrated by the university, which they considered to be slow in responding to their request for this documentation. When a response did arrive, the documents did not adequately address the initial problem of establishing equivalency for course content. Borri *et al.* (2007) has identified engineering courses as notoriously difficult to obtain recognition due to the highly structured nature of programmes at home universities. Carolyn (Section 6.3) was the third study abroad student that I met in Ireland who was completing engineering courses. This seems to confirm Borri *et al.*'s suggestion that limited participation of engineering students may be the result of the administrative difficulties in getting academic recognition.

Studying abroad was a significant risk for Henry and Irene because if their courses had not been recognised, they would have been required to complete an extra semester at their home institution, at added financial costs in terms of both tuition and delayed employment. I was unable to locate research analysing the impact of non-recognition of study abroad semesters. This may reflect the pass/fail nature of the semester, or an institutional desire to suppress negative results of educational programmes. This would be a topic for future research, but identifying students with such experiences may prove difficult.

Upon reflection, Henry and Irene recommended that other students still participate in a study abroad semester, but suggested that it would be easier to incorporate in the second or third year of an engineering programme when course options are more flexible. To ensure that a semester abroad includes all of the modules is important because it can be

difficult to synchronise at a later stage if elements are missing. This confirms DiBiasio & Mello's (2004) findings that many engineering students do not study abroad due to highly structured professional programming. Given the difficulties of these two students, it was logical to surmise that there must have been an absence of students from my fieldwork site who may have wanted to attend the university but did not do so because their courses were not recognised. Others abandoned their courses if necessary arrangements could not be made to complete academic requirements, such as the European postgraduate student who returned home after only one week because the laboratory equipment he required to finish his thesis, and which was only available in Europe at UL through academic exchange, was broken and would not be repaired in time for the student to complete his experiments. Therefore, it can be extremely difficult for science and engineering students to complete their studies while incorporating studying abroad.

Students who participated in my study were keenly aware of what would and would not count for credit. For example, Teresa (Section 6.5) was in the final semester of her degree. Non-recognition of her semester abroad would have required further study in Canada and cancelling her travel and employment plans after her period of study in Ireland was over. She selected her destination very carefully, for while Australia was her first choice, the academic year did not align with the Canadian system, and she would not have been able to complete her internship. Students such as Carolyn (Section 6.3) and Rose (Section 4.1) also indicated that they would not have participated if it meant extending their studies and they did their best to ensure that such an extension would not be necessary. Other students, such as Elizabeth (Section 8.4) were willing to graduate 'on time' with a study abroad semester rather than graduate early without one.

Study in Limerick offered potential academic benefit for some students. Lin (Section 4.4) had several options for a year of international study that would be incorporated into her business and financial services programme in China. The critical factor that persuaded Lin to travel to Ireland was that while a year at the other approved institutions in Europe, Canada, and Australia counted as one year towards her bachelor's degree, a year at the University of Limerick resulted in the simultaneous awarding of a

Chinese bachelor's degree and an Irish master's degree. Such a postgraduate degree would enable Lin to obtain a work-permit in Europe, and offer her many more job opportunities in the future. Lin, however, took a substantial risk in completing a year in Ireland because she had never been instructed in English before. Potentially, she could not have had her courses recognised, and not only be required to complete another year in China, but also have missed the opportunity to work in Europe after her graduation. The travel advantages for highly skilled migrants made this risk worthwhile for Lin and others (Shen 2008). Lin was the only student I met, however, who explicitly linked studying in Ireland with future employment prospects in Europe.

For researchers of educational tourism, the focus is on students enrolled in professional programmes, such as an MBA. Fields such as nursing, social work, business and engineering often operate in a fashion contrary to social sciences and humanities disciplines by placing more restrictions upon credit transfer. Qualifications earned abroad may not be recognised in some professions or require additional education at home. This is perhaps the result of limited curricular recognition of learning outcomes from international opportunities, where other fields, such as anthropology, language learning, or education, inherently incorporate and value new culturally-derived learning experiences. As a result, there is a distinct lack of research documenting the tourist experience derived from attending general study abroad programmes at the undergraduate level that are not institutionally or programmatically determined. The risks, whether real or perceived, directly affected the decisions of students in my study.

7.2.2 Travel risks

Whether a benefit or a risk academically, study abroad also presents travel risks. Once the decision has been made to study abroad, both the student and the university understand and minimise the travel risks the student might face. Students may have had to obtain visas, vaccinations, insurance, attend orientation sessions, and study in order to prepare for their time abroad (Andrews 1988). Home universities may ascertain whether countries, cities, or

programmes are safe, and may recall students if these conditions change, such as occurred during the aftermath of the 2011 earthquake in Japan where Canadian universities worried about potential radiation exposure from the resulting nuclear emergency in Fukushima (Cowan 2011). This reflects the liminal nature of studying abroad, where the university is still responsible for the safety of students, assuming that students are not entirely responsible for themselves. This has significant implications for universities with branch campuses as well, supporting a group of faculty and students regularly living in cities such as Cairo that have recently experienced unrest (Redden 2013). Ultimately, however, as much as a student may wish to operate autonomously, the university has the right to recall them in a state of emergency. This has institutional implications for anthropology students, who might be tempted to remain and collect ethnographically rich data in cases such as natural disasters (Skinner 2004) or armed conflicts (Nordstrom & Robben 1995).

For many students, a study abroad semester may be their first time travelling outside of North America and their preparation includes information gleaned from travel guides, international travel sites, student weblogs, and anecdotal comments from friends or relatives. Students had to weigh and evaluate each of these forms of information to they orient themselves while abroad. For example, I consulted an Irish travel guide in preparation for my fieldwork. Limerick City occupied twelve pages of the 574-page guide, detailing essential travel information, which prominent sites to see and which to avoid, shopping, spectator sports and outdoor pursuits, hotel and restaurant recommendations, performing arts centres, and day-trips from Limerick City. The opening introduction to Limerick City, however, is enough to turn a tourist away:

Limerick City has long wrestled with a crime problem (its knife crime is such that its nickname within Ireland is “Stab City”) and struggles to control gang activity. [...] Frankly, this is the kind of town where I spend all my time worrying about whether somebody is breaking into my car. (Daugherty 2007: 347)

This guidebook reinforces the general stereotype of the city and leaves the reader with the overall impression that one should simply drive through the city. The author explicitly stated this when she concludes: ‘Given that major sights are few, there’s little to keep you

here unless you're doing business' (Daugherty 2007: 347). Of course, students at UL are involved in a form of academic business and were required to be on campus during semester weekdays. The students I interviewed travelled more extensively outside the city, as the guidebook author recommended, with the exception of Monika (Section 4.5). Monika enjoyed Limerick, despite finding the city itself a little 'dodgy'. She encouraged other students to go there, and lived in the city with local professionals. It is difficult to ascertain if students avoided Limerick based on hearsay, or personal experiences, but given the convenience of catching a national bus right on campus, many preferred to travel outside of Limerick City.

Some students arranged their study abroad semesters in Limerick through an American academic service called Arcadia University, which characterises the city in a completely different light in promotional material:

When you want to venture off-campus, the city of Limerick and its surrounding region will be sure to delight you. You will find excellent cultural attractions and entertainment venues in the city, and outside of the city you will discover some of Ireland's most beautiful and prized natural wonders. (Arcadia University Center for Education Abroad n.d.: 15)

Limerick City presented a unique problem for university students in relation to perceptions of safety. Previously described as 'Stab City', McCullagh (2011: 23) has suggested that Limerick City is actually 'a low-crime city with a serious crime problem'. This criminality, and resulting mechanisms to ensure safety, serve to further insulate the university from the city. Students reported that they did not go into the city centre alone and travelled only in student-organised activities that included transportation back to the student accommodations on campus. This could have been the result of a handbook issued to all new students, but especially directed towards female students, in which they were advised by the university:

Please take normal precautions regarding personal safety both on and off campus. If you are coming to, or leaving the campus after dark, please ensure that there is somebody with you. It is clearly advisable to avoid areas which are poorly lit, or areas little frequented by the public. (UL 2008: 51)

The student's union organised night buses that travelled to the city centre from the campus, stopping at my residential hall in Rhebogue, before carrying on to the various residential complexes on campus.

This travel behaviour suggests that my informants were mitigating travel risks while in Limerick. Students did not report anything negative about the city, or encounters with local residents. Rather, they seemed predisposed to avoid the city. For example, I met one student who had participated in an orientation at her Canadian university prior to travel in which a study abroad manager had recommended that students be vigilant when they visited the city centre. I had a similar warning from a local resident against entering unknown pubs due to religious affiliations (Section 6.4). As a result, this young woman never went into the city, preferring to travel with friends to other cities. Students may have travelled extensively around the island, but were cautious when it came to travelling into Limerick City. It would be impossible to document the exact impact such events and comments might have on unconscious travel patterns amongst educational tourists given my fieldwork design because I was unable to attend pre-session orientations. Students employed online activities to mitigate these risks.

7.2.3 Online risks

Meeting strangers from the internet can be a dangerous activity, but many students interviewed used social networking sites to meet other international students before they travelled to Ireland, before classes began, to obtain advice on how to get started in Ireland, and to make friends or set up further travel plans. All students who participated in interviews as part of this study and whose stories are reported in my *immram* were identified and recruited through the social networking site 'Facebook' (Appendix 3). I will not be quoting from the students' online activities because this would contravene my ethical responsibility to create anonymity (Section 9.5.6). This is an important issue for study abroad students, however, so I will discuss the academic literature relating to online

activities of students more generally in order to contextualise the behaviours of my informants.

Both the interviewer and interviewee rejected traditional safety warnings about meeting strangers from the internet. I arranged to meet students in public spaces to offer a degree of safety for both of us. I suggested meeting outside the cafés so that we could easily recognise each other, as in the case of Rose (Section 4.1) who walked up to me directly. This way neither of us had the other's home address, and our lives could only engage again through serendipitously meeting on campus or purposefully planning to do so.

I did not identify any type of negative experience, either for myself or for other students, which changed their attitude towards their use of online social networking. Presumably, if such a trauma had occurred, the student's trust of such online forums would have diminished as recognised in Cheshire, Antin, and Churchill (2010). If this diminishing of trust had occurred, and newly reserved attitudes towards 'Facebook' had developed, the students would have moved outside of my pool of potential informants and simply not responded to my requests for participation as described in Section 9.5. To the best of my knowledge this did not occur.

The students, both male and female, also organised social groups to identify each other, find information about their living conditions, hints on travel, concerts, and parties prior to their departure for Ireland. This was in much the same way as Liao, Khoo and Hwaang (2005) identified among adolescents in Singapore or young people in Bangalore (Nisbett 2006), who were meeting each other in person through internet connections. Once in Limerick, students organised themselves into Friday night social activities based on campus and began to abandon online resources once friendships had been established. Once a new problem arose, new 'Facebook' groups were created that were open to any member of 'Facebook', where ideas about cheap travel and organised trips were shared. In these spontaneous and student developed virtual meeting places, a student would make a suggestion into the public forum of a destination and then private discussions would develop amongst students interested in accompanying the original student. We were all

engaging in internet behaviours that were more consistent with young people in Singapore (Liau *et al.* 2005) or Bangalore (Nisbett 2006).

Of those students who did use online social networking throughout their time at the UL, they began to announce when they would be arriving in Limerick prior to the beginning of the semester and tried to locate other students who arrived on a similar date. They published the name of their residence and room numbers in order to locate, and befriend, other students who lived in their halls. Once they arrived, they organised parties, day trips around Ireland, companionship for travel in Europe, concerts, and sporting activities. When their semester was completed, they returned to these sites to identify when others were going to the airport at a similar time in order to share a taxi, and to see who remained in order to organise further social events. While the sharing of such personal information might contravene socially established attitudes towards internet use amongst American and Canadian students (Cheshire *et al.* 2010), Lawy (2000: 409) has suggested that ‘young people may normalise certain types of behaviour and activities that, in a different community or in a different era, would be regarded as high risk’. Despite coming from a culture that promotes extreme internet caution in comparison to Singapore (Liau *et al.* 2005) and Bangalore (Nisbett 2006), these students embraced online social networking as a means of organising their time in Ireland, and indeed to create a group of friends in real life which offered them safety and protection. These findings suggest that internet usage varies depending on the presumed community participation in online networks. This seems to *normalise* online behaviour in Ireland that would be considered unacceptable upon their return to North America in much the same way as Jonathan Skinner (2010) normalised walking with women into dark alleys to interview them because the crowded salsa salons were too noisy.

7.3 The development of self-confidence

The remainder of this chapter provides analysis of student responses to those events that were unplanned and could not be predicted. Students’ discourse relate to overall patterns of

development, self-confidence amongst female students, how mitigating risks facilitates transformative learning and the development of autonomous *adults*.

The original scope of this project had been to examine the experiences among students who were mobile in Ireland, and discover how students used educational opportunities to become internationally mobile. During the interview process, however, the term *confidence* began to recur in relation to the perceived outcomes of their studies, beginning with my interview with Rose (Section 4.1). While more women reported an increase in their self-confidence than men did, it became evident that the question should be specifically addressed through a questionnaire in order to factor for particularities in this or another year that might have impacted the interviewee responses, based on the risks outlined in the previous section. Unfortunately, there is a distinct lack of North American male participation in study abroad programmes generally; possibly reflecting that studying abroad continues to be a female, middle-class activity (Section 1.2). This gendered distribution is unusual in international student migrations, where students from China tend to be only 50% female and migration from India is biased in favour of male mobility (Guruz 2011). Increased female participation may also reflect the gendered distribution of language students (Ramage 1990). None of my North American informants was specifically foreign language learners, except for Elizabeth (Section 8.4), and I am therefore unable to confirm this hypothesis. This chronic gender imbalance is reflected annually in North American participation rates for study abroad students (Table 2). Consequently, the comparative experience of men is outside the scope of this thesis because insufficient data could be collected to generate an equally robust understanding of the experiences of male international education.

An open-ended survey instrument allowed students to report their changing sense of confidence in their own words. It is impossible, however, to assess the degree of change or the impact that a particular experience had on an individual. In using an open-ended question I was able to collect a nuanced and detailed response as to whether a student felt they had gained self-confidence as a result of studying abroad. This question was optional (Appendix 4):

Please discuss whether you feel that you have gained any life experience/confidence as part of this experience?

The potential drawback of this question, of course, is that the term ‘confidence’ might have led students to report a greater sense of self-confidence than they might have done otherwise. Men and women may have had different levels of self-confidence before and after their travels. However, by making this question open-ended, rather than ‘yes/no’ or ‘to what degree’, as in the case of Nash (1976) and Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1966), the reflexivity and expressiveness of the respondents offered further insight into their thinking. The students compared two perceived psychological states within themselves, thus correcting for the question bias and differential estimates of change. For the purposes of this thesis, I am not using a definition of ‘confidence’ derived from academic literatures because the respondents would not have been familiar with those. Rather, I wish to focus on the vocabulary they used as part of the narrative processes: self-reliance, independence, growth, and discovery. These terms are not synonymous with the definition of confidence, but do reflect a general sense of belief in oneself to overcome problems without familiar frameworks. I originally had trouble finding relevant academic literatures to engage with other ideas because I was employing the vocabulary used by my informants as keywords, rather than academic jargon such as ‘self-efficacy’ (Milstein 2005) as an outcome of studying abroad.

Of the 27 responses to this question, only two respondents answered the question negatively, citing no changes in their confidence because of their time in Ireland. None reported a lessening in confidence with the overwhelming majority (93%), however, reporting increased self-confidence. The students’ direct use of the term ‘confidence’ (44%) was to be expected in such a leading question. Other vocabulary was also employed to convey a sense of transformation, including ‘independence’ (28%), ‘maturity’ (4%), and ‘life experience’ (12%). While the terms confidence and life experience certainly generated a response bias, several respondents used a combination of these words with others (20%). For example, the following response focuses explicitly on how travelling has caused this perceived increase:

Absolutely. I am much more confident travelling, and living, alone now than I was before. I have gained a degree of self-reliance that I didn't have when my family was within driving distance.

Respondent G (25, Female, USA)

Respondent G visited Ireland as a postgraduate student. She had already completed a master's degree in Galway and began doctoral studies during the 2008/9 academic year. Although she felt a sense of isolation the first few months after moving to Ireland, the experience overall had been positive. She stated elsewhere in the survey: 'Studying overseas was incredibly formative for me, as I discovered what exactly I want to do with my life'. When she planned her studies abroad, Respondent G reported that she had an overall desire to live abroad generally, and wanted to improve her career prospects. The sense of self-reliance and personal formation was not the learning outcome that she had intended as part of her studies, but it is the one she references the most throughout the survey. Respondent G never mentioned any sense of risk or danger in relation to her study, travel, and online habits. However, she did report that although she had travelled around Ireland and gone to England on holiday, she had never travelled alone. Respondent G's comments are consistent with Mohajeri Norris and Gillespie's (2009) findings that studying abroad correlates with future international employability, in a similar fashion to Lin's *immram* (Section 4.4). Lin was the only student I interviewed, however, who explicitly stated this as her goal, suggesting that social experiences were of greater importance for the rest of my informants.

Exclusively, women reported the second most common attribute, independence. For example, Respondent L was a Visiting and Exchange student. She had completed half of her bachelor's degree programme in Business at a denominational university in the eastern United States, and this was her first experience of studying abroad. In her response to the survey question, she did not employ the term *confidence*. Rather, she reported:

I have changed so much from studying at NUIG. I find I am so much more independent and new situations don't intimidate me. I signed up for a year in another country where I didn't know a single person (either already in Ireland, or studying abroad there) and ended up having the time of my life and making really good friends. I know from spending the year there that Ireland is where I would like to live in the future.

Respondent L (21, Female, USA)

Respondent L ties the establishment of a friendship network with her sense of independence. In her study of British youth, Brooks (2002) concludes that the establishment of new friendships is congruent with emerging social locations in periods of repositioning. The sense of safety and ability to try new things that are offered through trusted friendship networks generated such a positive orientation for Respondent L that she was even hopeful that she would be able to move to Ireland permanently. While universities can create opportunities for students to meet through orientations and shared accommodations, it is ultimately up to the student to create a network that offers opportunities for a successful study abroad semester that fosters self-confidence through intercultural interactions.

Similarly, Respondent O had completed half of her bachelor's degree in Arts and Business from a denominational university in the mid-western United States. She lived in private accommodation that had been previously arranged for her by her home university. Therefore, one form of travel risk was diminished in that she knew she already had a safe place to live and from which to begin to explore the world around it. She hoped to renew family ties while in Ireland and attended local religious observances. Upon answering the survey question, she reflected:

I have a whole new outlook on life. While abroad I met amazing people who taught me a lot about myself, and helped me to become less stressed and more open to things I previously would not have been. I also have gained confidence in my independence, I know that I can do things by myself and achieve my goals.

Respondent O (20, Female, USA)

Milstein (2005) has suggested that this outcome could be structured more coherently as part of a pre-travel orientation by universities in order for students to recognise this opportunity

for intercultural learning. By highlighting the importance of trying new things, meeting new people, and overcoming adversities, students could engage in deeper intercultural experiences, thereby learning more about themselves and their host cultures by becoming 'more engaged with the challenging process of intercultural change during the sojourn' (Milstein 2005: 235). Regardless as to the degree of guidance offered, it is up to the student to engage in this process at all, or whether to resist change. Brown (2009b) identified that those who try to resist change suffer negative experiences while studying abroad. The personality and orientation of the student is crucial, therefore, to foster opportunities for personal development through intercultural interactions.

This new sense of confidence and independence is not easily won, of course. For example, Respondent E was a study abroad student who had completed half of her 4-year bachelor's degree in psychology at a liberal arts college for women in the north-eastern United States. Ireland was a new and unknown place that caused some distress to Respondent E before and during her sojourn. Respondent E recognises her personal growth:

Putting yourself into a situation where you are unfamiliar with the culture and do not know anyone will inevitably lead to personal growth. I learned a lot about myself and overcame a lot of personal fears and anxieties because I had no other choice. I also learned a lot about a foreign culture, which will give me an enhanced world view in the future.

Respondent E (20, Female, USA)

This is consistent with Brown's (2009b) findings where once students are removed from their familial and social frames of reference they have an opportunity for self-discovery. This transformation could happen anytime, but in the intense context of studying abroad this means that students, as well as learning about themselves, also learn about others through intercultural experiences. Brown (2009b: 509) suggests that if this 'attitudinal change was irrevocable it would outlast the sojourn, and would carry implications for future [...] interpersonal relationships'. Therefore, while transformative learning can result without intercultural interactions, intercultural experiences offer students an intensive opportunity for personal transformation because of studying abroad. This outcome is generally omitted from the marketing literature (Mazzarol 1998), and while it is often

referred to as a 'life changing experience', the nature of that transformation remains unstated.

It is precisely in overcoming these fears, anxieties, missteps, successes and failures that ultimately resulted in transformative learning outcomes for these students. Respondent H was a student who had completed half of her four-year Bachelor of Arts programme in the social sciences at a university in the American mid-west. During the questionnaire, Respondent H reported that she had often been sick during her time in Ireland, and had difficulties both with the new names of medications available in pharmacies and with where she should go to seek medical attention. Such medical risks, of taking conflicting medications for example, are extremely difficult to prepare for. By overcoming this risk successfully, she accounted for her resulting transformation in terms of improvement:

I feel that I have gained a wonderful life experience that will be with me throughout the rest of my life. In having to provide for myself, I gained a confidence I never knew I had. I was definitely a different, better person in Ireland and I loved it!

Respondent H (21, Female, USA)

Such discourse recounting a 'different, better person' is indicative of a personal transformation resulting from meeting immediate needs, as predicted in transformative learning theory (Section 3.3.3). This was not necessarily the learning outcome that students had expected when they became internationally mobile. For example, Respondent U was a Study Abroad student during the 2008/9 academic year. She had completed half of her bachelor's degree at a liberal arts college in the Pacific north-west in physics. She had hoped to develop a deeper understanding of Irish culture through her exchange. She reflects:

I really thought that I would be learning more about the Irish culture than I would be learning about myself. I had so many experiences in Ireland that really caused me grow. I think that it really depends on the person, but it seems that you discover a lot about the country and its people, but even more, you discover yourself and the kind of person you will become.

Respondent U (20, Female, USA)

Students can enter study abroad programmes with a variety of expectations. In the case of my pilot study (Nielsen 2010), students had expected a very traditional Irish lifestyle that is no longer present in the cosmopolitan ‘Celtic Tiger’ economy. My informants Monika (Section 4.5) and Carolyn (Section 6.3) had both expected to be taking Irish language classes while studying abroad. This is a limitation of student understanding of what courses might be expected of them, where the destination becomes more important than the content. Many of my informants, after studying in Ireland for one semester, wanted to work or study abroad again, this time in a foreign-language environment, such as Jennifer (Section 8.2), Carolyn (Section 6.3), Michael (Section 6.2), and Natalie (Section 8.6).

As can be seen in these responses overall, students perceived an increase in their own sense of self-confidence when they overcame the risks associated with international wandering for academic purposes. In fact, they directly attributed it to their international studies and the friendships they established in the process. Respondents U and H highlight the difficulties that researchers have in analysing transformative learning experiences, such as self-directed learning. This form of learning addresses immediate practical needs, learning outside the classroom, reshaping expected social roles that are motivated by personal desires, using quantitative instruments in that a necessarily brief response to a survey question that seems to evoke positive and reflexive responses cannot be followed-up. The nuanced responses to this question negated the vocabulary bias in the survey question because students took advantage of the opportunity to elaborate on their reflections.

7.4 Self-confidence and adulthood

Rose’s self-confidence, as a result of her successful dealing with her physical trauma (Section 4.1), reflects McLeod and Wainwright’s (2009: 69) findings of students in Scotland and France, where ‘the violation of expectancies and the feeling of being forced to take risks were a centrally important and necessary, albeit painful, part of their positive learning experience’. It is precisely these unexpected challenges that cannot be inserted into curricula but that should be fostered when they occur in order for students to have the

potential to develop their self-confidence and independence through international student mobility.

Respondents reported an increased sense of confidence and autonomy, which can be conceptualised as the process in which a young person becomes an *adult*. That is not to say that they are, de facto, *adults* because of their experiences studying in a new country. Rather, these experiences combine with others to build a unique individual. Their experiences enable them to become ‘the multicultural person [who] is always recreating an identity as roles are learned, modified or discarded in each discontinuous situation’ (Pedersen 1991: 18). Marginson *et al.* (2010: 53) have even gone so far as to suggest that ‘the transitional character of the study experience, and the large communities in which it plays out, opens all international students to changing associations and new kinds of self’. Of course, this is not necessarily an inherently positive experience. Research by Mori (2000), Pedersen (1991), and Yi, Lin, and Kishimoto (2003) has demonstrated that the psychological stress that students endure may allow students to develop new selves, but they may not be the selves that they wanted, and some can develop negative personalities just as easily. As a result, this liminal period, as characterised in Section 3.2.2, is an ambiguous time that can foster the development of happy and healthy intercultural *adults*, but just as easily situate depression and isolation in personalities whose development is stifled by the experience of studying abroad. It is ultimately up to the student to decide how to navigate this liminal period, and to find resources both during and after to further their personal development, as they become *adults*. I am aware that as participation in this study was optional, students who were suffering difficulties are not likely to respond to my request for an interview or participate in a questionnaire. The results I collected, however, would seem to confirm Daloz’s (1988) conclusions that students learned secrets about themselves, their culture, and the world that they want to create for themselves by studying abroad. As reflected in the survey responses in the previous section, students began to see themselves, and to project themselves, as independent *adults*, and their overcoming of challenges and resulting sense of self-confidence contribute to a developing sense of *adulthood*. This tendency would seem to confirm that international students are involved in one form of a *rite of passage* into *adulthood* in which liminoid students leave their familial

homes to make a life in a new place. While international wandering is certainly not the only passage a student can make towards *adulthood*, it was the most clearly identified reason for positive personal development for students while they completed their studies abroad and participated in this study.

Similarly, Gmelch found that ‘a large majority of the students believed their experiences – having gone abroad on their own and having travelled extensively through Europe without the supervision or support of parents or other adults – had given them more self-confidence’ (Gmelch 1997: 484). They reported becoming more adaptable, and could now cope with uncertainty and the unexpected; they could deal with new situations and survive. Students had to learn new currency systems, talk in new languages, gather information, speak with strangers, and respond to the inevitable missed train connections, getting lost in a new city, or having difficulties in finding accommodation for the night. Gmelch suggests that it is in overcoming these challenges that students became more confident in their own abilities to negotiate new situations. Gmelch also concluded that students learned more from organising their own trips than they would have on organised educational fieldtrips. This is consistent with my findings in Chapter 5, where students organised independent travel with their friendship networks that contributed to their growing sense of self-confidence.

Using self-reporting data can be difficult when analysing concepts such as *confidence* and *adaptability*, and I am relying on this same form of data. However, such self-reporting is vital in order to understand how students consider themselves to have changed as part of their international educational experiences. For example, Gmelch noted the added benefit of international education programmes rather than domestic courses:

Students apply the information they learn to daily life, and thereby promptly discover the gaps, deficiencies, and mistakes in their understandings [...] Students use more of their senses to gain information, rather than depending solely on language and abstract symbols as they do in conventional classroom instruction. (Gmelch 1997: 489)

Overall, Gmelch (1997: 476) found that ‘students believed they were learning more from their travels than they did from their academic courses’. This is consistent with the survey

responses in the previous section when students used vocabulary such as self-reliance, independence, growth, and discovery.

Gmelch suggests that his students were not learning dates and figures for exams. Rather, they were learning to read maps, use railway systems, find food and lodging, perhaps all in a language they did not understand. This infinitely larger classroom required students 'to find and arrange for travel, shelter, food, local transportation, and decide how best to spend their free time, not once, but several times every weekend' (Gmelch 1997: 487). This skill is what Phipps and Gonzalez (2004: 2-3) have characterised as 'linguaging':

Linguaging is a life skill...it develops and changes constantly as that experience evolves and changes. The student of a language other than their own can be given an extraordinary opportunity to enter the linguaging of others, to understand the complexity of the experience of others to enrich their own.

In this sense, study abroad experiences have the potential to contribute to the formation of adult identities because students are in the process of developing their ideas, values, and aspirations as part of growing up. Gmelch's limited focus on learning from texts such as maps and guide books restricts the potential for transformative learning that results from intercultural interactions. The more students interact with other people, the greater opportunities for such transformations. Gmelch's cohort of students was from the same university, limiting the ability of friendship networks to provide intercultural experiences because they were composed solely of American peers. My informants, however, lived in mixed accommodations and joined internationally-themed societies, establishing internationally-oriented friendship networks. This suggests a limited transformative opportunity for university-led tours. Students who are integrated into a university in another country experience greater opportunities to contact local residents and meet students from other parts of the world, thereby improving their linguaging skills.

While Gmelch's conclusions are not intended to be universal, they do offer a glimpse into the experiences American students are having during study semesters in Europe. He does not identify the precise year this study was conducted, so inferences about

political, cultural, and sportive events that might have influenced student experiences and travel patterns are not available. He also does not describe the demographics of the students involved, such as the numbers of male and female students, their average ages, or programmes of study, which makes the data difficult to transfer from one setting to another. This data would have been helpful in comparing our results.

7.5 Conclusion

Unexpected intercultural interactions and the overcoming of daily challenges in unfamiliar settings without family, friends, or institutional support, enables study abroad students to become self-confident and independent *adults*. The confidence students develop in this process enable them to undertake more changes in their lives and move into increasingly different cultural and linguistic contexts, skills that they will then take with them into the future. The geography may be different, peer-faculty interactions unfamiliar, and the first few weeks in a new place can be very challenging in terms of finding food, friends, and fun. Confidence, independence, and adaptability that students acquire from out-of-class experiences are important factors in the development of an *adult* who will participate in a globalising society.

The survey responses included in this chapter demonstrate that the personal development of students, in relation to their perceived skills and emerging *adult* identities, can be profoundly impacted by studying abroad. This type of educational activity, provided through wandering, presents a unique balance of controlled and random stimuli to force students to engage with new surroundings, new social interactions, and new languages, and offers tremendous potential for the creation of transformative learning opportunities. It is precisely this form of wandering that enabled personal transformations through the incorporation of independence and self-confidence and the broadening of future possibilities. Through experiencing the unfamiliar and taking risks, new social spaces that are uncomfortable have the potential to influence the development of a student. Such experiences are, in essence, student-led and impossible to structure into the traditional

university classroom. International student mobility offers students the opportunity to experience personal transformations through the refinement of new frames of reference by moving beyond real and perceived academic, travel, and online risks to fully experience life in Ireland and Europe. In the following chapter, I examine the impact such experiences can have on adjusting academic and professional aspirations.

Chapter 8 Changing directions

Throughout my thesis so far, I have outlined the personal and professional goals of the students I met in Ireland, highlighting both the types of travel the students experienced and how that travel affected their goals. I then identified that each student felt some form of personal development had resulted from these experiences. In this chapter, I examine that personal development more closely to determine how studying abroad contributes to the establishment of *adult* identities by focusing on their academic goals, their professional goals, and their touristic behaviours in turn.

8.1 Academic goals

Each student had specific academic goals in mind. For some, it simply was not to fail any courses. For others, academics directly affected their ability to graduate. For students like Rose (who studied accounting, Section 4.1) or Henry and Irene (who studied engineering, Section 7.2.1), academic goals were clear. For others, such as Monika (Section 4.5) and Natalie (Section 8.6), it was more

important to experience Ireland, and the content of their courses was secondary. A third group experienced a more substantial change, a change in academic focus. My own doctoral journey reflects the substantial change of the third group.

Photo 33: Brighton Clock Tower.



Source: © The Author, 2007.



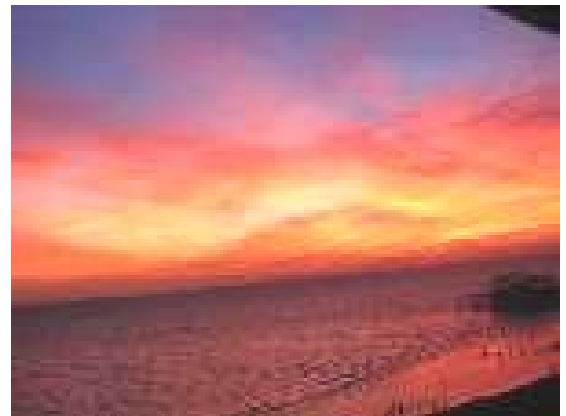
When I moved to the UK in 2006, it was with the hope of completing a one-year masters degree specialising in anthropological research methods. With this qualification, I hoped to gain admission to a Canadian doctoral

programme in anthropology. My year went very well, and I completed the degree. I subsequently applied for doctoral programmes in both Canada and the UK, but ultimately decided to stay in the UK to continue the project that I had begun in my master's thesis. My research focus, however, had shifted slightly, and my general interest in the anthropology of tourism was sharply focused onto educational tourists during my pilot project (Nielsen 2010). This refinement was a direct result of the people I met, and the stories and experiences they shared with me. The anthropology of education was a completely unfamiliar field to me, unfortunately, and as I developed my research idea and read new fields of literature, it became clear to me that I was much more interested in the learning of students than in their travel patterns.

Coming to the decision to make such a radical change is difficult. You have to accept that you may be completely abandoning the work that you have done so far, and potentially starting over again in a new field. In my case, the refinement was a direct result of the people I met along my journey, including the students I interviewed, but also

friends and colleagues. I was engaged not only in learning about the world around me but also about myself. Where did my passions lie? In the end, I was influenced not only by anthropological and educationalist fields, but geography, political sciences, and policy studies. Education had the biggest appeal, however, and that is why I came to complete this thesis in the education department. I was not the only student who made radical academic shifts while in Ireland.

Photo 34: Sunset over Brighton Beach.



Source: The Author, 2006.

8.2 Immram of Jennifer



I met Jennifer in the Millstream Café in Limerick at the end of November in the early afternoon. I had asked for an early afternoon meeting because I was attending a conference that was to begin that evening, and I wanted to make sure I had ample time to do both. It was a significant week for Jennifer as well, as she had just met a teacher who had inspired her to change her academic focus, and that would necessitate her taking another semester abroad. Her enthusiasm melted away the gloom of an Irish afternoon rainstorm and it was infectious. I could feel her change in outlook, as she laid out her new academic plans for me.

At the age of 20, Jennifer was beginning to shift her ideas about the future. A marketing student from the central US, she was beginning to imagine a new career path, in health and well-being. She wanted to broaden her horizons, to learn more about the world, and how to find fulfilment within it. She

found Irish culture to be romantic, and wanted to explore it further so she applied to study abroad. She enrolled in Irish dance/music and folklore courses, and began to annoy her flatmates with her incessant tin-whistle practice, which was a requirement for her Irish music class. Many international students at UL were required to complete a class in which they learned how to play traditional music. However, new horizons attracted Jennifer beyond a marketing/business worldview while she was in Ireland.

Photo 35: Sunset in Limerick City.



Source: © The Author, 2008.

Inspired by her experiences with ecogastronomy, she was no longer concerned about returning to the US to complete her bachelor's degree. Instead,

she hoped to transfer her major, and study abroad again, this time in Italy. She began working at the local farmers market that came to the campus each Tuesday to sell local produce in order to expand her knowledge and experience of ecogastronomy. In her imagined future, she hoped to become a chef that ran her own greenhouse. Alternatively, she hoped to open a well-being centre for women balancing physical and spiritual activities equally - massage, exercise, and an organic café with painting, creative expression, and therapy.

While filled with a renewed inspiration to continue her studies, Jennifer began to feel that her time in Ireland was holding her back. She was only completing mandatory courses, which no longer interested her. She had just met a new teacher a week before our interview who was helping her organise her ecogastronomic studies in Italy, and this became the general focus of our conversation. She simply intended to complete the required academic assessments with a minimum of effort in order to spend the remainder of her time in Ireland preparing for her new programme, career, and personal outlook towards her potential future.

Jennifer's change in perspective was the result of meeting a particular teacher, in a particular time and place. Once her focus had shifted, she began to create a new friendship network that did not include other international students or even students in general. Rather, she began to focus her energies around meeting with and learning from local Irish farmers. Her travels were now being organised around this activity rather than touring Europe with her international flatmates. It was meeting new people and experiencing new ideas that facilitated Jennifer's academic shift away from business in general and towards opening a business related to ecogastronomy. Both Jennifer and I unknowingly cultivated experiences that would radically change our careers based on meeting new people in Ireland, and we shifted our academic foci accordingly.

8.3 Professional goals



For other students, while their academic goals were clear, their professional goals were not.

Studying abroad, therefore, became an activity onto itself, a part of a larger academic plan to create the best opportunities for any profession in the future. For example, in 2007 I decided to complete a PhD in anthropology in the UK in order to return to Canada and teach at a university. I had included the UK as a possibility if I was unable to gain admission to any Canadian anthropology programmes, but noted that many of the professors who were teaching anthropology in Canada had completed their own doctorates in the UK. As I related in the Section 8.1, my research developed and I shifted my academic focus towards the field of education. Speaking with an increasingly diverse group of people, I began to question my professional aspirations as well. Did I truly want to teach or focus on research? Did I still want to move back to Canada anymore? Might some other profession be more desirable, such as a

policy advisor, programme developer, or educational advisor? I am still unsure of my answers to these questions, but by completing my doctorate I am sure that I will place myself in just the right profession in the future. Some of the students I met in Ireland were similarly creating the best academic foundation possible to support multiple professions in the future.

Photo 36: Calgary manhole cover.



Source: © Mike Anderson, 2012.

8.4 Immram of Elizabeth



We met in the Library Café in early November, and Elizabeth was the second of three interviews for me

that day. She was a second-generation study abroad student. Her mother had studied in Paris and travelled to Italy, Spain, London, Scotland, and Vienna, and intended to do so again while visiting Elizabeth in 2008.

Photo 37: Shamrocks on UL campus.



Source: © The Author, 2008.

Elizabeth was a junior at a university in the north-eastern United States, completing an undergraduate

degree in psychology and business, with minors in Spanish and Italian. She chose travel to Ireland, rather than other choices such as Australia, because she wanted to see Europe. Given that she had previous knowledge of Spanish and Italian, it is very interesting that she choose Ireland. She did so in large part because she was of Irish ancestry. She was active with the basketball and lacrosse teams at her home institution, but an injury had prevented her from playing for several months, so this was the best time for her study abroad opportunity.

Elizabeth had decided to take easy classes in order to ‘experience everything and not feel stressed by school’. While she was in Ireland, she enrolled in courses in traditional Irish music/dance and completed her general requirement courses (as part of the bildung tradition outlined in Section 1.2) with courses in media and cultural studies, political science, and commercial law. She found her courses to be easier than at her American university, where she felt pressured to get honours in everything. The classes in Ireland were different, ‘they required less projects, have less face to face time with the professor, and

the classes are much larger'. She had chosen her courses primarily on the recommendation of students who had studied in Ireland the previous year. Elizabeth was confused by the grading system though, where '40% is a pass and 60% is a B'. She lived in student accommodation on campus and shared a flat with three other American girls and four 18-year old Irish 'boys'. Elizabeth felt frustrated by this situation, where she perceived the difference in their maturity levels to create an 'us against them' scenario, where different cultural expectations for cooking and cleaning created opportunities to learn, if frustratingly, how to live with others. This was the first time that Elizabeth had lived with men. In spite of her living conditions, she was travelling with friends, which made her feel very comfortable in Ireland. She was also one of the many students I talked to who had no heat in her accommodation and found she was having several hot showers a day just to stay warm.

When she returned to the United States she was expected to write a critique of her experiences as a requirement of her programme. In addition to these impressions about

Ireland, school and living accommodations, she was positive about her activities, including the outdoor pursuits club where Irish and American students were 'coming together and having fun' and 'trying something new'. She hoped to complete law school in her late twenties and maybe do an MBA in the meantime. She had the opportunity to graduate early, but ultimately chose not to do so that she could play lacrosse for one more year. With her psychology and law degree, Elizabeth hoped to achieve a position in her early thirties either as a psychology professor or as a forensic psychologist working for the Federal Bureau of Investigation, or some other government agency. Studying in Ireland did not contribute to this professional plan, but offered an opportunity for personal development. She reported that the experience 'had changed her a lot'. She now felt that she had a clear picture of 'what I can do on my own, making moves to do what you want to do. I wouldn't trade it for a championship'. We were only one month into the semester when we talked and already she felt that she was learning to become a more independent person.

Photo 38: The Glucksman Library, UL.



Source: © The Author, 2008.

For many students, university is a time for personal discovery. As they progress through their degree, they may add a second major or change fields altogether. They may also choose to leave higher education entirely. Nevertheless, for some students the future is not clearly delineated and they create the best possible academic foundation for a multitude of employment opportunities. Elizabeth planned periods of work alternating with professional postgraduate degrees for the next ten years as she builds upon her academic foundation. It would be impossible for anyone to know with absolute certainty what they will be doing in five years or twenty. Elizabeth seems to have internalised this uncertainty, assuming that her types of

employment will change over time. She has a clear idea of an ideal profession, forensic psychologist, as her goal in ten years time. However, with the further education I have accrued in a ten-year period, my own *immram* suggests that this may not be Elizabeth's final employment destination. In this sense, studying abroad served to broaden her horizons rather than limit her to one professional outcome. Given the shifting academic aspirations I have discussed in the previous section, it is very likely that Elizabeth's professional goals will change over time with new experiences as well. Studying abroad offers opportunities to both experience new things, but also to reflect upon them and integrate them into individualised personal development.

Photo 39: Students in front of the Glucksman Library, UL.



Source: © The Author, 2009.

8.5 Touristic behaviour



In Chapter 5, I outlined the touristic behaviour of my informants, examining how they travelled. They were alternatively a tourist in a new place or a host guiding visitors through Ireland. The experiences of travelling to a new place, finding your bearings, adjusting to the local pace of life, engaging with new people, and experiencing new ideas first-hand offered them an opportunity to identify and challenge their conceptualisations about the world around them, and how they wish to relate to it for the rest of their lives. Studying abroad provides them with an opportunity for an intensive and immersive experience in other ways of being in and relating to the world. For almost all of the students whom I interviewed, this was not only their first independent trip, but also their first trip abroad. Does this type of travel always have the same effects on personal development or is there some form of diminishing returns over time?

My first independent international trip was to the UK to complete the one-

year master's degree programme and I tried to get the most benefit I could during my time there. While I completed my academic requirements, I also made many friends in my student residence, travelled with our university's International Student Society, volunteered with a local Scout group, and travelled alone to academic conferences in Denmark and Slovenia. Although we had tried to plan a trip to France as a social vacation, my friends and I found it difficult to find a convenient weekend to do so and to obtain the necessary visas.

Throughout this year, I never imagined that I would stay on and complete my doctorate. As I met new people and tried new things, I came very much to like the place in which I found myself, and to appreciate the academic and professional opportunities that a British doctorate might provide. As time passed, however, I was no longer a tourist seeing Brighton for the first time. Either I was avoiding busy touristic streets, making friends with local residents or other students who intended to remain in the UK for several years, and hosting my friends when they came to visit. I began to get settled there. While I did not see myself as becoming *British*, I did feel my

orientations and values shifting. I never imagined, for example, that I would get married while completing my doctorate, as conventions state that marriage and children should be left until after graduation and finding a job. I also never imagined that getting married might mean shifting my ideas of who I was as a person, what I wanted out of my life, and what kind of person I wanted to be in the future.

The second major shift occurred during a move to Ireland for eight months of fieldwork. I certainly made the same transition from *tourist* to *host* in Limerick, but found my way much more quickly than the first time. I knew which phone companies had cellular prices I could afford, which stores offered the cheapest home supplies, I could walk to the city centre, and quickly made friends with my building manager and academic mentor who both gave me tips about Limerick City. I was able to focus on my research within a week or so of arriving in Ireland.

While fieldwork in Ireland this time gave me a substantial data set with which to construct my thesis, it did not have the same effect of personal development as I carried on with my

studies and developed myself professionally towards my goal of becoming an anthropologist. I did not make nearly as many friends, and did not associate with or orient myself towards local Irish people in the same way that I had done in Brighton. I was now an independent researcher, rather than one student amongst many while working on my masters'. I did not volunteer with Scouts because I felt that I needed to dedicate my time to meeting potential informants.

I succeeded in accomplishing my academic and professional goals while I was in Ireland. I used my experiences of moving to the UK both in terms of orienting myself in Ireland but also as a means of building rapport with my informants. Reflecting on these two experiences, however, my move to the UK challenged me far more to prove I could survive on my own and create a new life. In both locations, I did not have to learn a new language from scratch, although it took me a while to understand local idiom and expressions. My informant Natalie was similarly more affected by her first trip abroad to Argentina than her second to Ireland was.

8.6 Immram of Natalie



After several attempts to organise a meeting time for our interview, Natalie and I finally settled on a date in late November and met in the Foundation Café. Natalie was similarly balancing commitments, and was about to attend an Irish Studies class in which all my informants were enrolled. This was a busy day for me as well, as this was my second interview of the day, and I had a research-in-progress seminar hosted by the department of political science to attend in the afternoon.

Natalie was 24-years old and a senior from a university in the north-eastern United States. When she finished her final semester in the US, she intended to return to Europe for a master's degree or to work with a research organisation in the fields of farming and sustainable living.

Since Natalie had no required courses to complete, her course selection reflected some of her personal interests: courses on women writers, social

sciences, and agriculture. She reported a similar disparity in course assessments as the other students I have included in my thesis, where she was not required to do coursework or writing, but was assessed by a midterm and a final examination. She felt that if she did not attend her class that 'probably no one would have noticed'. While she felt she might learn more by interacting with classmates, she did enjoy her relationship with her professor. She had originally hoped to spend a year in Ireland on a government loan, but the department at the UL was considered insufficient to support her thesis development and so she hoped to organise an internship later on to repay the private loan.

Now she was in her senior year at a university and had majored in Women's Studies and Environmental Studies. She was very interested in local agricultural practices and was even able to organise a voluntary job as part of the farmer's market on campus. Given her particular programme, Natalie was required to subscribe to five of a possible 12 courses approved for transfer. She had worked full-time prior to her studies and chose to spend as little time as possible studying in

order to enjoy travelling in Ireland as well as international travel.

Natalie's grandparents had been Irish, and the opportunity to get in touch with her family roots was a significant draw to studying in Limerick. She had never been to Europe before, but just before arriving in Ireland, she made a trip to the Czech Republic. The time to make such a trip was available to Natalie because she had never been unemployed up to that point, working three, and sometimes four, jobs a year. She still had to obtain a small loan to cover the remaining necessary funds for the trip. Natalie joined the outdoor pursuits club, just as Elizabeth did, and spent much of her time on trips with them around Ireland, hiking, mountain biking, and running.

Natalie was unique in my study because she had previously spent a semester in a country in which she did not speak the language. Natalie reported virtually no change in her self-confidence and that was unusual compared to my other informants. She did not internalise this period of mobility as significantly transformative in relation to a previous period of time spent in Argentina. Natalie had been significantly inspired while

previously living abroad at the age of 17. Her time in Argentina was inherently transformational in her view, and had influenced her decision to study internationally for a second time.

Oh my gosh when I was 17 I went to Argentina and I came back as a different person! I was forced to be independent to go off on my own to talk to people all in a different language and culture. It has made me much more confident and sure of myself.

Her experiences in Ireland were enjoyable but not as influential as her Argentine experience. She was better able to predict risks that might confront her and find new ways to soften their impact. In spite of this diminished return, Natalie hoped to arrange an international internship upon her graduation.

Photo 40: Flowers on UL campus.



Source: © The Author, 2009.

Natalie's *immram* is remarkably similar to my own. Although she was ten years younger than I was during her first study abroad experience, we both became more self-confident as a result. Our shared second study abroad experience in Ireland, which was approximately three years later for both of us, seemed to have less impact. We used the skills and strategies from our first studies abroad to inform and shape the second experience in Ireland. We both had family connections to Ireland, and were both focused on professional outcomes from our higher education experience. Our first extended period abroad had a greater effect than our second did on our transitions to *adulthood*. For example, we were not as focused on making friends as during our first trips. Indeed, Natalie did not speak of her friends in Ireland at all, which also made her interview stand out in comparison to the others I completed. Natalie had developed an international focus to her perceived future, and intended to carry on travelling for academic purposes after her graduation. Her *immram* suggests that while the first study abroad period experience can significantly alter student self-perception

and orientation, each subsequent trip offered different experiences. That initial self-confidence and international orientation, however, was established in Argentina for Natalie and subsequently reinforced in Ireland. Further research on this phenomenon is required to ascertain whether this is a unique case or a trend amongst international students more generally.

Photo 41: Spring flowers in Brighton.



Source: © The Author, 2009.

8.7 Reflections

All of the students I have introduced in this chapter (myself included) changed their orientation towards the world in some way because of studying abroad. For Jennifer and I, it was a change of academic focus. For Elizabeth and I, it was a change in professional aspirations. These shifts are to be expected, however, as each student comes to know a new place on their own terms, and develop their individual strategies for navigating them. These shifting directions are not steps forward, nor are they backward. It is more convenient to understand them as a form of wandering, experimenting, and integrating those experiences into developing identities.

In this chapter, I establish that the touristic destination does not necessarily affect the processes of personal development. Rather, it is the experience itself, of travelling anywhere, to try something new. For both Natalie and I, our first periods studying abroad were more formative than our second was. We both fostered an intercultural outlook to our possible futures, and intended to continue to meet new people and try new things despite the smaller changes in our

second trips. The role of friendship networks diminished in this sense, as we had more confidence in our own abilities to not only survive, but thrive in a new place and challenging circumstances. Given that I studied in the UK and Natalie in Argentina, it would also seem that the degree of language proficiency allows for more immediate connections with local people, but does not necessarily change the outcome of the experience for the student. It would seem that students who study abroad develop themselves personally at their own rate, and in response to their individual experiences.

Photo 42: January flowers, Brighton.



Source: © The Author, 2008.

Chapter 9 Ethnography unbound

In reading, as in storytelling and travelling, one remembers as one goes along. Thus the act of remembering *was itself conceived as a performance*: the text is remembered by reading it, the story by telling it, the journey by making it. (Ingold 2007: 16)

9.1 *Introduction*

The epistemological and methodological foundations that informed my fieldwork and data analysis have important implications for developing an ethnographic tradition focused on movement. I begin by discussing my research philosophy and position my work within the ethnographic tradition. I elaborate on the methods employed to collect data relevant to my research and the challenges I faced in completing my fieldwork. I conclude with a discussion of how this epistemology informed the construction of a particular field for investigation in Ireland, the role comparison played in analysing data, and the impact on my writing process.

9.2 *Research philosophy*

As an anthropologist of education, it is my philosophical position that individuals learn about the world around them through the culture in which they are immersed. That is to say, we live in a shared social world, and learn from others on a continuous basis. For example, Anderson-Levitt has defined culture as the ‘learning that people do as members of human groups, not learning done completely on one’s own without the intervention of other people’ (2006: 280). A cultural group, however, may be difficult to define, and has received extensive debate within the field of anthropology (see Barnard & Spencer 1996a).

In relation to intercultural learning, Byram (1997: 17) has identified how culture affects personal development:

People become members of a group through a process of socialisation over time, and when they are members, they are constantly negotiating their common understanding of details, which over time may become major changes in their beliefs, behaviours or meanings.

For my purposes in this thesis, it is not necessarily the quantity of members that shapes the form and content of learning within a cultural group, but rather how an individual situates themselves within social relationships to establish friendship networks that is of importance to the learning process. Anderson-Levitt (2006: 282) suggests that within the context of the anthropology of education, 'ethnography is useful, first, for discovering what meanings different actors are making of a situation' through continued observation as social and cultural processes occur. The epistemological positioning this orientation provides focused my attention on the international students *in situ*, during a period abroad, in order to examine how they construct new social groups and learn from one another. I had originally designed a multi-sited ethnographic approach combining semi-structured interviews, participant observation, an online questionnaire, and virtual ethnography that I will describe below. This combination allowed me to collect varied forms of data that, when collected and compared, provided a foundation for the construction of knowledge of a social field: a case study of study abroad experiences. Over time though, the limitations of this design became apparent.

Just as students occupy multiple spaces and identities, so too does my ethnography occupy multiple sites. As a researcher, I am inherently connected to my field site, as I am the locus of my own field. As a fieldworker and international student, I simultaneously inhabit two spaces, and it would be impossible to write an ethnography without also including autoethnographic experiences that locate me within my field, how the field was constructed, and how informants' experiences shaped my own participant observation, interviews, and questionnaire design, as I shared my own life with them. With the interactive nature of relationships in mind, I will explain how I went about constructing my multi-sited ethnography.

9.3 *Multi-sited ethnography*

Within the anthropological tradition, ethnographic methodology employs multiple research methods simultaneously in order to develop a deeper understanding of the social context of a particular locale or phenomenon (Sanjek 1996). For example, participant observation involves establishing and sustaining meaningful relationships with informants. Participant observation alone, however, cannot render access to every time and place within a chosen field. It can also be difficult to establish meaningful relationships with transient people, such as tourists or study abroad students who are only in a place for a short amount of time. Amit has suggested that ‘a variety of corresponding methods – interviews, archival documents, census data, artefacts, media materials and more – [are needed] to explore processes not immediately or appropriately accessible through participant observation’ (2000: 12). I employed interviews, participant observation, and an online questionnaire to achieve this synchronicity, described below. Immersion by studying a specific group of people in a limited place/time will allow an anthropologist to comprehend the implications and interpretations of cultural phenomena in that specific place and time. When examining the context of student wandering, however, it was difficult to conduct fieldwork with informants who were constantly changing locales. Multi-sited ethnographic methodology allowed me to trace student movements and experiences beyond classrooms and into the unbounded social reality in which they engaged on a daily basis. Wentzel Winther (2013: 112) suggests that:

Everyday life takes time, in circadian rhythms, in life time and in historical time. It takes place between the public and private space, between out and in, in known and unknown places and in the in-between-space.

Everyday life has, and continues to be, the focus of ethnographic research. It was the everyday life of students that had a profound affect on their developing sense of *adulthood*, rather than their classroom experiences, that offered this potential to learn from others. This is in much the same way as Wentzel Winther’s island case study where children would go

out into the street to find other children to play with, learning how to interact, and the values of their isolated community.

Within ethnographic tradition, the field site has been of paramount importance. Anthropologists spend much of their ethnographic writing describing space, constructing boundaries, and defining the site in order to contextualise the communities they have examined and to validate their conclusions. I have attempted to do the same by recounting my own *immram* (my journey and learning) through the same spaces as my informants throughout this thesis. Multi-sited ethnography attempts to trace people as they move among locales, following their movements through new environments at local and global levels and/or through time. Appadurai (1991: 196) presents this new ethnographic endeavour in the following way: ‘The task of ethnography now becomes the unravelling of a conundrum: what is the nature of locality, as a lived experience, in a globalized, deterritorialized world?’ Greater ease of mobility has facilitated travel to a specific site of study for anthropologists. At the same time, informants within these fields also have wandered farther than they have in the past, such as in the case of my study abroad informants, and new techniques of fieldwork are necessary to take account of these changes.

The focus of multi-sited ethnography is the exploration of interconnections that individuals experience, such as their response to larger social stimuli in their relationships, the language they use to describe these relationships, and the material objects that they use to navigate these multi-focal places. Marcus (1998: 90) defines multi-sited ethnography as ‘designed around chains, paths, threads, conjunctions, or juxtapositions of locations in which the ethnographer establishes some form of literal, physical presence, with an explicit, posted logic of association or connection among sites that in fact defines the argument of the ethnography’. In this way, rather than situating myself in one place and studying what happens around me, multi-sited ethnography requires the examination of physical, virtual, and imaginative movement between spaces, following a person in order to examine how cultural formations impact wandering students at both the individual and systemic levels.

This approach is predicated on the assumption that multiple sites, or loci of activity, should be the focus of analysis.

Within educational ethnography the classroom has been the traditional site (Pierides 2010). For some, such as Pole and Morrison (2003), educational ethnographies are linked to a place: a site of learning such as a classroom. A multi-sited approach such as the one I have employed in this thesis, however, would also include the halls of residence, pubs and restaurants, as well as how the campus relates to the larger community because students can learn anywhere, from anyone, and about anything. After speaking with study abroad students, I would argue that students themselves also construct their own sites, or spheres, through movement. They employ online resources to connect people and places that might be separated in terms of geography in order to identify comparative experiences of similar forms of mobility. The transient nature of the semester, and travel undertaken in this short period of time (Chapter 5), heightens the sense of community for these students, which is independent of formalised physical sites, and requires more internal and psychological energies to construct and maintain the various roles of movement activities, such as *hosts* and *tourists* as described in Section 5.3. While this might seem to reflect Relph's (1976) conceptualisation of 'placelessness' that incorporates a sense of loss, that loss might have different meanings in other contexts or places in the form of friends, family, or familiar institutions. The place-making process of the students identified in this thesis is equally authentic using multiple sources, physical and virtual, in constructing a place that has meaning for the students on a personal level, such as in the *immrama* of Natalie (Section 8.6) and Elizabeth (Section 8.4), who were also seeking their family connections while in Ireland. By seeking roots they were constructing an even greater sense of their place in the world.

Study abroad students inherently occupy many spaces simultaneously, such as a classroom, shared accommodation, a pub, a shopping market, an airport, bus station, sidewalk, river, or farm, that are all new to them. They are in the process of creating a new world for themselves, which necessarily places themselves at the centre, just as Course's 'centrifugal person' (2010), moving away from a central home. This process lends itself to

multi-sited ethnographic analyses because, as Amit asserts, informants are ‘multifaceted social beings with involvements, experiences and stories reaching far beyond the limited purview of any research project’ (2000: 2). The challenge for anthropologists is to develop theories and methodologies to account for, interrogate, and compare the activities of informants both inside a classroom and within larger local, national, or global contexts. Thus, moving beyond multi-sited ethnography to something akin to Ingold’s anthropology of movement (2011) allows anthropologists to move with their informants and study them as a field unto themselves. For example, Baas (2010) has conducted a similarly oriented ethnography of Indian students in Australia where he traces their lives through various stages of their degrees, how they imagine their relationship with India, and their efforts to find work, and their places in Australia as they attempt to gain permanent residency there. In both Baas’ field and my own, students are creating identities influenced by metaphors, cultural traditions, and personal experiences. A continued focus of multi-sited ethnography on locality could have limited my understanding of this case study, as students belonged to two universities simultaneously both physically and in their imaginations. They participated in extra-curricular activities that provide an infinite number of *third* field sites composed of the multiple physical, mental, and virtual destinations that they explored, and through their memories as they recounted their experiences to me during my interviews. As a result, previous studies of study abroad programmes, such as Gmelch (1997), cannot account for the transformational learning students’ experience as a result of independent travel, outside of the structured activities of study abroad programmes. As I conducted my fieldwork, however, I came to believe that reconceptualising a bounded field as a multi-sited field by focusing on individuals does not fully account for the experiences of studying abroad. This focus continued to restrict my gaze to one or two activities and prevented me from intellectually following my informants’ journeys. Ingold (2011: 139, emphasis in original) has suggested that stagnation in place limits our understanding of ourselves, and the world around us, when he states:

It requires an effort to stay in place. And this effort pulls *against* sound rather than harmonising *with* it. Place confinement, in short, is a form of deafness.

This is just as true for a wanderer as for a fieldworker. Positioning yourself physically in one *site* or following one *person* through space can prevent you from experiencing the wider world around you, and incorporating the sounds, sights, smells, and texture of those experiences. Ethnography allowed for the incorporation of all possible sites in data analysis, but still limited my own understanding of the learning internalised by students who were each in the process of creating their own mental localities: their own *adult* identities.

By looking beyond the site, and indeed the multi-site, I was able to focus on the students themselves, in their individual and varied processes of transitioning. Ingold's anthropology of movement allowed me to examine both my own experiences *becoming* an anthropologist and those of my informants who were *becoming* adults because these processes were paralleled in my experience as a fieldworker. Ingold (2011: 14) suggests that :

Whether our concern is to inhabit this world or to study it... our task is not to take stock of its contents but to *follow what is going on*, tracing the multiple trails of becoming [...] To trace these paths is to bring anthropology back to life.

My own site was constructed using similar methods to those employed by my informants, where the dislocation from home, isolation in Ireland, easy access to air travel, and use of social networking sites enables individuals to locate one another, and construct activities in which they participate as wanderers.

This thesis challenges our conceptualisation about the nature of 'the site' versus 'multi-sited' ethnographies in favour of constructing new ones based on movement, such as in the case of remembered homelands by those living in refugee sites, transnational familial networks, or religious pilgrimages (Coleman & von Hellermann 2011). This is not to say that these are liminal communities as in the sense of van Gennep's (1960) liminality, but rather reflects how both students and myself construct fluid communities when surrounded by the unfamiliar by establishing friendship networks as forms of mutual support (Section 5.2.3).

Ethnographers attempt to create accurate representations of social worlds for their readers, and to understand the diversity of social realities. We misjudge the power of relationships to think that the ethnographer would not also be affected by fieldwork experiences, just as they may have an impact on the lives of their informants. Therefore, as an apprentice anthropologist completing my doctorate, Ingold's (2011: 238) words resonate for me:

An education in anthropology, therefore, does more than furnish us with knowledge *about* the world – about people and their societies. It rather educates our *perceptions* of the world, and opens our eyes and minds to other possibilities of being.

In order to better understand my own fieldwork experiences, and how these might impact my analysis and my development as an ethnographer, I want to spend some time discussing how I situated myself in relation to my field, the methods I used while conducting fieldwork, and how I analysed and ultimately represented my findings. This chapter represents how I have come to develop my own perception of how young people become *adults* through studying abroad.

9.4 The researcher as a primary field site

Multi-sited ethnography is interested in following people, things, or ideas across space and time. The researcher, as a follower, is equally important in understanding complex social relationships and becomes a source of data themselves as they walk together (Ingold 2011). Turner (1982: 14) suggests that through interaction with other people we learn about ourselves:

We can know our own subjective depths as much by scrutinizing the meaningful objectifications “expressed” by other minds, as by introspection. In complimentary fashion, self-scrutiny may give us clues to the penetration of objectification of life generated from the experience of others.

It is for this reason that I have included my own *immram* throughout this thesis. My life is intimately intertwined with my field and my informants. This technique builds upon itself, creating ‘a kind of “hermeneutic circle”... or rather, “spiral,” for each turn transcends its predecessor’ (Turner 1982: 14). In this section, I discuss using personal experiences as a form of ethnographic data for analysis, and the implications this has on moving beyond multi-sited ethnography in future educational research.

The reflexivity of the anthropologist is important in ethnographic methodology. As a type of ‘academic migrant worker’, anthropologists themselves are similarly multi-sited as a form of international student mobility (Amit 2000: 8). They travel to and from the field regularly owing to family or professional obligations. While in the field, the anthropologist continues to have contact with family, friends, and colleagues. I moved *to* and *from* my *field* several times during my fieldwork, including returning to my university to attend a working-group meeting for the establishment of a doctoral school, back to Canada for Christmas like my informants, and taking a brief break from the field in March for a few weeks to save money before my final interviews in Dublin. Each time I was required to get a new 90-day tourist visa as Ireland did not have ‘research visas’. This is a concern for all anthropologists, of course, and site selection and movement in the field must be carefully planned (Gupta & Ferguson 1997). Each time I left Ireland, I risked being denied re-entry to my field site. As a result, of course, I brought all valuables with me on each transit, as a denial of entry meant the abandonment of any belongings and data if they were left behind in Limerick.

Clifford suggests that a university itself could be a site of ethnographic fieldwork because it is ‘a place of cultural juxtaposition, estrangement, rite of passage, transit, and learning... sites of comparative theory, of communication and critical argument among scholars’ (1997: 210, 211). My own research, however, was interested in the world beyond this site, and how students moved between these worlds. Inherent in my research were comparisons among university students in the US, Canada, Ireland, and the UK, and as an ethnographer I had to recognise my own personal biases in developing and analysing my data. It helped me to explore the nature of my relationships and commitments with my

informants, assess my motivations both to undertake the research, and to account for what I choose to study as part of my fieldwork in this chapter. Marcus (1998: 15) calls this a process ‘*self-discovery in fieldwork*’ that leads an ethnographer to follow an idea, ask another question, and reconsider their previous findings. I have tried to do this through my *immram*.

What constitutes an ethnographic *field* has been redefined in recent years (Coleman & von Hellermann 2011; Coleman & Collins 2006b; Marcus 1998; Gupta & Ferguson 1997; Amit 2000; Clifford 1997). For example, in the case of Pink’s fieldwork with Spanish migrants (2000), Pink herself was often the link that constituted the community that she was researching. By acting as the host of social functions, Pink introduced her informants to each other. Had Pink not been conducting her research, they may have never met. Therefore, was Pink an active agent in the creation of her field? Without her involvement, her field would not have existed. Some of my informants did know each other, however. I did not introduce them to each other in order to maintain anonymity, although some did refer their friends to me.

9.4.1 An autoethnographic project

Each *immram* that I analyse in this thesis is inherently my own construction. I have brought the stories of these students together to create an ethnographic understanding of study abroad experiences of North American students in Ireland. Within a broader ethnographic context, Amit (2000: 15) notes that ‘it may not be sufficient or possible for anthropologists to simply join in. They may have to purposely create the occasions for contacts that might well be as mobile, diffuse and episodic as the processes they are studying’. This was certainly the case for my fieldwork as gatekeepers consistently denied me access to institutional sites. Therefore, I had to use alternative means to identify and meet with informants. In some respects, this mirrors the experiences of the students themselves, who reported that they were creating their own spaces and occasions for social interactions through social networking sites. I identified them by participating and employing the same strategies, thereby inserting myself into their virtual communities. This was consistent with

what Frohlick (2006: 98) has noted, namely that ‘just as anthropologists attempt to gate-crash, gain rapport, exchange information to reciprocate favours and negotiate their access to circuits of information and people, so too do research subjects whose lives and mobilities are not so disconnected from our own’. It is within this messy, overlapping, and fluid context that I construct my own field in this thesis.

Of course, there are dangers in using the experiences of ethnographers in their texts. Collins and Gallinat (2010: 15) note that ‘the first question we are required to face is the extent to which using the self as a resource is a ploy or a conscious strategy’. Certainly, for some readers, a personal narrative draws interest into an ethnographic text. My *self* is relevant to how I understand, and represent my field, in the analysis I have developed in this thesis. My *immram* is the story of *my* wandering, and the language I developed through the process of meeting other people on similar, or tangential, trajectories through Ireland at the same time. Ingold (2011: 211) has suggested that anthropologists ‘are wanderers, wayfarers, whose skill lies in their ability to find the grain of the world’s becoming and to follow its course while bending it to their evolving purpose’. My experience, as described in this *immram*, reflects my learning trajectory towards a professional identity, just as my informants transitioned to their *adult* identities.

This thesis itself represents but one footstep amongst the many I have taken towards becoming an anthropologist. By constructing a narrative *immram* in my thesis and basing it on my own, personal experiences, I am able to reflect on the stories that derived from the interviewing process. Similarly, understanding my own experiences in this fashion allows me to consciously analyse when my own biases or experiences might interfere with my interpretation of the experiences of others. Johnson, Chambers, Raghuram, and Tincknell (2004: 209) have characterised this as ‘individual memory work’, that is, ‘writing shorter pieces based on recollections of particular episodes and around a specific theme or question’. In effect, ethnographic reality is only possible in the intersection of my own ideas and experiences with those of my informants. Writing my own *immrama* allowed me to include my interactions with others and allowed me to locate my analysis precisely at this intersection. Gallinat (2010: 28) suggests this when she states that ‘all anthropologists

rely on their personal memories and experiences, not only in order to establish rapport but both when writing down (their notes) and writing up (their ethnography)'. She further reinforces this point when she suggests that memories from before fieldwork can be included 'as long as they do not become the only voice to be heard' (2010: 40). In my *immram*, I have compared my informants' experiences with my own, similar ones, to reveal my understanding for the reader.

I was initially hesitant to include autoethnographic narratives because common critiques of this form of narrative analysis include 'claims of narcissism, self-absorption, exaggeration, exhibitionism, and self-indulgence on the part of the researchers that use personal experiences as a central focus of their research' (Šikić-Mićanović 2010: 45). My first experiments in writing autoethnographic vignettes for this thesis and in papers that I presented at conferences in the fields of anthropology and geography were not well understood. It is difficult to integrate the types of subjective materials that I have ultimately placed in the alternating *immrama* chapters in a balanced fashion that academic audiences understand and feel comfortable with accepting as research. It is my hope that in writing two parallel narratives in this thesis that the analytical chapters complement my informants' narratives that I collected during fieldwork and vice versa. This format is similar to McCarthy Brown's *Mama Lola* (2001), where she contrasted fictional ethnographic chapters with those based primarily on participant observation with a key informant. In balancing the narratives of *immrama*, I have tried to avoid accusations of narcissism or exhibitionism that are sometimes generated in response to autoethnographic accounts.

Researchers drive research itself, however, and their interests and methods are inherently influenced by their personal experiences and social encounters. As outlined in Kohn (2010: 193):

The self-conscious individual engages in multiple social and cultural environments, and if her memories are active accumulations of experiences born out of a lifetime of intersecting and transforming reflections, then serendipity, like reflexivity, should be considered as a journey rather than a destination.

The analysis in this thesis would seem incomplete without also presenting my own experiences, which informed field site selection, topics for further exploration, participant selection, and how data was analysed. For example, I chose Ireland as a field site before I chose a research topic through a personal interest that developed while I was living in Montréal, Canada from 2002-2006. After completing a postgraduate certificate in Canadian-Irish studies at Concordia University, and attending Ciné Gael (Hearne 2003), an annual Irish film festival, I decided that I wanted to go to Ireland as my site for research. My original research focus, however, was heritage tourism and as a pilot study to prepare for this thesis I attended a summer school in Belfast in order to meet heritage tourists in Ireland (Nielsen 2010). I was as fascinated by the curricular programmes as with the students in the programme, so decided that my Ph.D. research should focus more explicitly on students as learners rather than simply as tourists. These early experiences fundamentally shaped the focus of my thesis and is similar to Hannerz's (2006: 32) reflection upon how his choices of field sites evolved over time, and in relation to his interests, issues of access, and socio-historical events. He suggested that anthropologists should possess: 'a certain willingness to seize unforeseen opportunities, a general sensibility towards ways of making anthropology out of realities which might otherwise remain mere distractions'. With a better understanding of my own positionality and epistemology, I set out to seize one such distraction and establish my own approach to ethnographic methods to study student-led learning that is informed by personal experiences.

9.4.2 Ethnographic reflexivity

At a fundamental level, anthropological texts now require some form of autoethnography through the incorporation of reflexivity, locating themselves in the field, and establishing relationships with their informants. Jordan highlights this need when she states that 'contemporary ethnographic writing calls for sustained and heightened self-reflexivity and demands that the ethnographer's self be foregrounded as a filter of everything that has been learned' (2001: 42). The lives I represent in this thesis are necessarily mediated through my own experiences, in terms of my experiences with my informants directly and

my own experiences as an international student. The similarities affect how I understand and represent their experiences. This confirms Basit's (2013: 6) proposition:

Sharing the age, gender, ethnicity, religion or heritage language of the research participants can doubtless allow the researcher illuminating insights into the social world of the researched, while also respecting the boundaries that must not be crossed.

Although I was eight years older than the majority of my informants, we shared several aspects of generation, age, gender, ethnicity, nationality, and heritage language.

It was imperative that I included in my writing my own motivations and interpretations because 'researcher identity is intrinsic to the production of research texts from the field, the analysis and interpretation, and the eventual recontextualization in the written report' (Dunne *et al.* 2005: 77). By incorporating *immrama* chapters, I endeavoured to contextualise my fieldwork experience and the data I collected in what Dunne *et al.* have characterised as a 'construction of a reading through processes of refinement and a move away from the field through text towards a reader' (2005: 78). An objective account, devoid of the author's voice, restricts that refinement because 'researcher identity, their interests and values, are integral to the way that the intermediary texts for analysis and interpretation are derived, brought together, handled and further recontextualized in the writing' (Dunne *et al.* 2005: 82). When revising the chapters and with further readings, I realised that my story was important too. Therefore, I set out to create sections that could stand on their own, and clearly marked them further by changing fonts, heading styles, and adding a visual graphic to remind the readers that a different form of narrative analysis was in play.

The ethnographic project is incomplete if we excise the personal experiences from the writing process. Jordan (2001: 42) agrees with the inclusion of the author's experiences:

What the ethnographer will present in her text is not the unmediated world of the other, but the world created 'between' her self and the other, and the insider/outsider dichotomy is nuanced by conceptualisations of the boundary position in which research gets done.

This process intimately ties the ethnographer, and their experiences, to their interpretations and representations of fieldwork in subsequent writing projects.

9.4.3 Gaining access

While in Ireland, I interviewed as many students as possible about their daily lives, their observations about their experiences, and how they understood their experiences during their time abroad. Simultaneously, I was a visiting student myself, and attended courses, seminars, workshops, libraries; in short, I too was studying abroad. I originally determined that conducting extensive fieldwork based at one campus in Ireland was required to interview students during their liminal wandering through new spaces. I had very limited time in the field, and even more limited funds to complete my research, and as many anthropologists before me, I sought the aid of gatekeepers to facilitate my access. For my purposes in this thesis by gatekeeper I mean ‘those individuals in an organisation that have the power to withhold access to people or situations for the purposes of research’ (Miniechello *et al.* 1997 cited in de Laine 2000: 123). By accessing university gatekeepers, I had hoped to mitigate the limitation of my own ‘lack of specialist knowledge required to find participants’ (Clark 2011: 487). However, as Clark (2011: 490) has identified, gatekeepers in educational contexts often have their own ‘aims, purposes and interests that exist externally to their research involvement’. I was unable to gain access to a field site through institutional gatekeepers.

At first, I tried to gain independent access to students through institutional management. I began by examining Northern Irish universities because I had a student visa to live and work in the UK. When I interacted with gatekeepers and informants, I realised that I could only capture a moment in time, and that moment could be highly compromised. I applied for permission to conduct in-person participant observation with students at several universities. A gatekeeper, with different qualifications, rejected each application. For example, permission for in-person research was denied owing to the University of

Ulster's perceived responsibility to protect the identity of their students in line with the Data Protection Act (UK 1998). However, their International Office offered to administer a survey to international students as an acceptable substitute because they would collect the responses themselves, thereby placing themselves between the students and myself. This challenged my responsibilities to protect the responses of my informants through anonymity requirements as set out by the ASA guidelines for ethical conduct (1999). This caused concern for me as I wanted the students to feel free to express their impressions of the university itself, as well as their experiences beyond the university. As a result, I declined this offer, and carried on looking for a field site at which to construct my multi-sited field.

Accessing institutional field sites will be an increasing concern for educational ethnographers in the future. Accessing children and young people through schools, charities, social workers, or parents each offer different challenges as rights and responsibilities are constantly being redefined. For example, Heath, Charles, Crow and Wiles (2007: 405) have identified that gatekeepers are increasingly restricting access to young people for research purposes because 'the right of gatekeepers to give or withhold access is in practice often conflated with the right to give or withhold consent, even though gatekeepers have no legal powers to give or withhold consent on their charges' behalf.' Being consistently denied institutional access to students, I employed other avenues to identify and recruit participants. All of the students interviewed as part of my thesis were contacted directly as a result (See Appendix 3), and each student decided whether to participate. They were all over the age of 18, and had the right to make their own decisions in regards to participating in my project. The concern of university gatekeepers, however, seems to reflect the epistemological responsibilities universities continue to maintain in relation to the development of young people into adults, a responsibility to *bildung* described in Section 1.2, in that they arise from a concern for the well-being of their students. From this point of view it is understandable that universities might deny access and consent 'through the overprotectiveness of gatekeepers' (Heath *et al.* 2007: 409).

Heath *et al.* (2007: 410) have suggested that access and consent is most often denied by educational gatekeepers on the grounds of personal inconvenience or ‘reluctance to expose quasi-private worlds to public scrutiny, or the actual or assumed inappropriateness of a proposed research topic and/or its methods’. Alternatively, university administrators might be seen as protecting their institutions rather than their students. Johnson *et al.* have identified an irony in this when they note that some institutions, such as universities, are actively ‘resisting their own objectification by foreclosing research on their own group, while encouraging inspection of subordinate groups’ (2004: 213). Ultimately, I was unfortunately unable to identify the exact reasons for each denial, and this would be a very interesting topic to explore in future research.

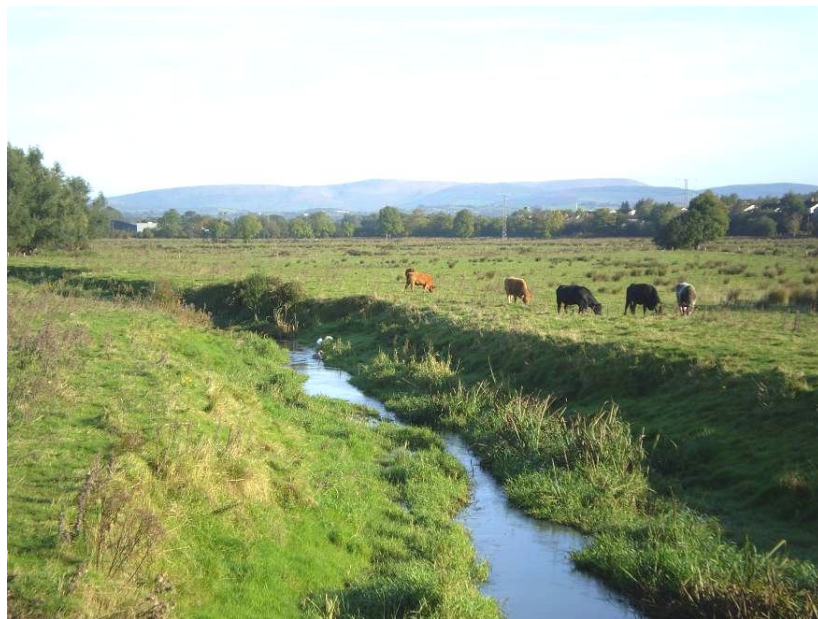
The UL is Ireland’s newest university. It has organised itself as a *European* university, and welcomed international students from Europe through the ERASMUS programme as well as study abroad students from North America and exchange students from around the world. Once I obtained a Visiting Research Fellowship at the CEUROS, the support of this affiliation offered me an opportunity to conduct participant observation and compare my observations to those discussed by students, who I independently identified and interviewed as part of the study. Students approached for interviews and included in this analysis were recruited using social networking sites familiar to my own cultural groups (in this case ‘Facebook’), and in this sense I became a site that the students interacted with as well. My position as a visiting research fellow afforded me access to the campus, and to several cohorts of students at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels. I aimed to follow the daily routines by attending the lectures and seminars of students in our research centre, but have not included their experiences in this thesis because they were primarily Irish by nationality, and therefore not studying abroad.

9.4.4 Establishing my centre

If I begin from my centre, the home from which I expanded my social world, just like Course’s (2010) ‘centrifugal person’, I can locate the centre of my emerging field. I was not a normally registered exchange student so I could not obtain a residence on campus like my

informants. Instead, I rented a small apartment from a private company that built a student residence designed to cater to students from UL, the Limerick Institute of Technology, and the Limerick School of Art and Design. This was a very quiet building, located half way between the city centre and the university campus, both of which were a 45-minute walk away in the opposite directions. This area of Limerick City is called Rhebogue Meadows. Joyce suggests that the name for this area, Réabóige, is most likely derived from the old Irish Réidh Bog, meaning ‘soft moorland plain’ (1995: 117). While recent economic prosperity had expanded the urban sprawl of the city (my residence was a part of this), the area continues to be a rural setting with grazing fields for cattle (Photo 43), and wild blackberries were a treat to pick while I walked down the road to the university campus. The area had several shopping complexes for groceries, goods, electronics, gas stations, and new residential complexes, some completed and others in development.

Photo 43: Rhebogue Meadows, Limerick City.



Source: © The Author, 2009.

This accommodation was originally a source of anxiety for me both logistically and personally. I was concerned that the residence might be too far from the campus, but I

reserved a shared apartment anyway because most spaces had been booked already. I paid the relevant deposit and reserved a room from abroad just as Teresa had done in Galway (Section 6.5), and worried that I would be homeless otherwise. Making international bank transfers is never an easy task, and I almost lost the reservation due to my own bank in Brighton delaying the payment because, according to them, I had been ill-advised the day I placed the order as to the amount of fees this transaction would incur. I was unaware of this issue because I was away in Ljubljana and my UK cell phone did not work (Section 6.1). I was very frightened when I returned home a week later to receive an e-mail telling me that I was about to lose my reservation. Once I arrived in Limerick City, I was just as unhappy with the accommodation as Teresa was (Section 6.5). The only stipulation I had made in relation to my potential flatmate was that they be a non-smoker, but the building manager assured me that the entire complex was non-smoking. When I arrived the flat reeked of smoke despite the open windows, and a hookah was located in the kitchen. I complained to the building manager and insisted that I be offered another room. The only other room he had available was a single apartment that had been reserved by a young man (who had already paid his non-refundable deposit) but had not arrived at the beginning of the semester. The manager called him but he did not answer the phone. As a result, the manager left him a message stating that he had lost his room and I was able to rent the apartment. I had hoped to live with other study abroad students so this change in accommodation was another cause of anxiety for me: Would I be able to collect enough data? Would I be able to conduct the same level of participant observation? These anxieties are common to most apprentice anthropologists (Cook 2010).

Upon reflection, obtaining access to students and accommodation in Limerick may have been the most difficult aspect of my project. If I were to complete this ethnography again, I would not have been so focused on setting up data collection opportunities even before I had entered the field. Just as my informants learned to be confident in themselves, and in being able to make their way in a strange place, I learned that I was able to organise many different opportunities to collect data and complete ethnographic fieldwork. Interestingly, my effort to create a viable multi-sited field limited my understanding of study abroad experiences despite my own experiences as an international student in the UK

because I was focusing on a singular location. Study abroad students travel much more than local students and it became difficult to include these experiences while focused on one locale. In the end, as I have outlined elsewhere:

It probably did not matter so much which city I was living in, but more so that I was *living* there, going out, talking to taxi drivers, building managers, local pharmacists, anyone with a story to tell about meeting international students (both in Ireland or on their own travels around the world). (Nielsen forthcoming)

9.5 *Intertextuality and ethnography*

Ethnographic methods pose challenges for a young anthropologist. My first challenge was to establish a group of students as informants. For my analytical purposes in this thesis, I constructed a cohort of students studying at different universities during the same academic year. In the sections that follow, I outline my overall philosophy towards using ethnographic methods in collecting data to create texts that can be compared. Strategies to collect data included interviews, participant observation, and questionnaires. Data were compared with available secondary sources, quantitative and qualitative research projects, and social networking sites in order to supplement my analysis and gain a broader understanding of studying abroad. The next challenge was to assess what the implications might be for the facilitation of learning from studying abroad.

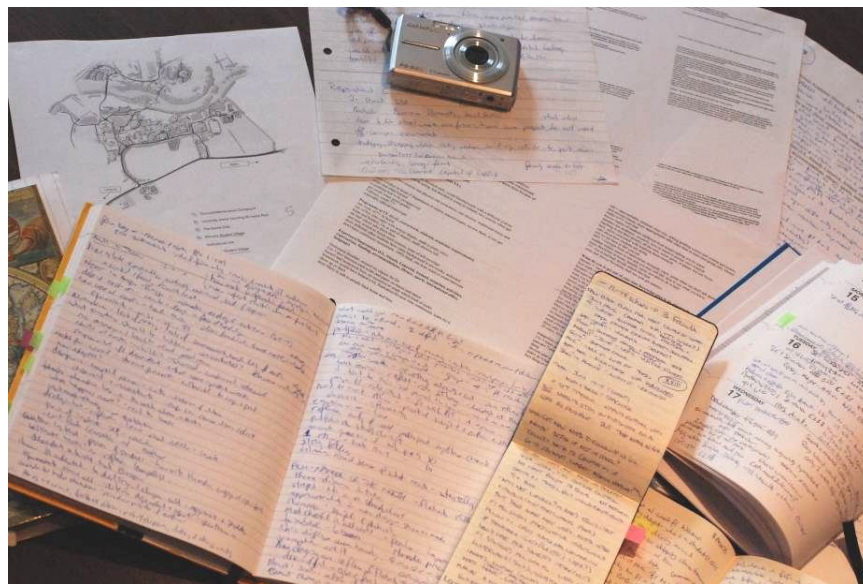
Financial limitations significantly shaped my data collection process. Once fieldwork had commenced, I quickly identified travel as a primary site of transformative learning through intercultural experiences. However, participants were travelling across Europe and without research funding I did not have the funds to travel with them. In order to address this limitation, all semi-structured interviews included a section on travel experiences: how they were organised, who attended, and a reflexive analysis of their adventures. Of course, where possible, I conducted my own travel as well, but these were generally limited to pre-arranged travel to obtain comparative interviews from around

Ireland, travelling to and from the field for administrative responsibilities, or to visit with family.

9.5.1 Notebooks as data

My second challenge was the taking, storing, and organisation of notes as a form of text for analysis. Throughout the research process, at the end of each survey period, session of participant observation, or interview, notes were generated that supplemented the notes taken during interview sessions with informants. I wrote notes to collect impressions or identify further avenues of inquiry. These notes were then used to formulate new questions for the next stage of ethnographic research with informants. This process allowed for comparison of informant responses and to use Flick's (1992) notion of triangulation in order to compare the responses between informants and to improve the research design and theoretical perspectives which might best reflect the experience of the student.

Photo 44: Intertextuality.



Source: © The Author, 2013.

I generated several forms of notebooks during my fieldwork (Photo 44). First, I kept an annual diary in which I recorded appointments and other events. In the case of lectures or seminars that I attended, my notes of these academic events were recorded in this diary as well. This diary became a useful tool in understanding how different events might have happened on the same day and how data might be connected by time or sequence. This notebook is very factual and only offers a quick reminder of when events occurred so that it was easier to go through my other, more detailed notebooks. I kept this form of notebook throughout my Ph.D. research, in both Ireland and the UK. Supplementing my annual diary, I kept a field diary in which I recorded my experiences of events, research leads, library notes, telephone numbers, ideas, and information on the tours I took around Ireland. I kept this diary separate from the regular notebook in which I wrote field notes. These notebooks comprised part of my daily research tools, which I carried with me at all times (Photo 45).

Photo 45: The fieldworker's toolkit.



Source: © The Author, 2013.

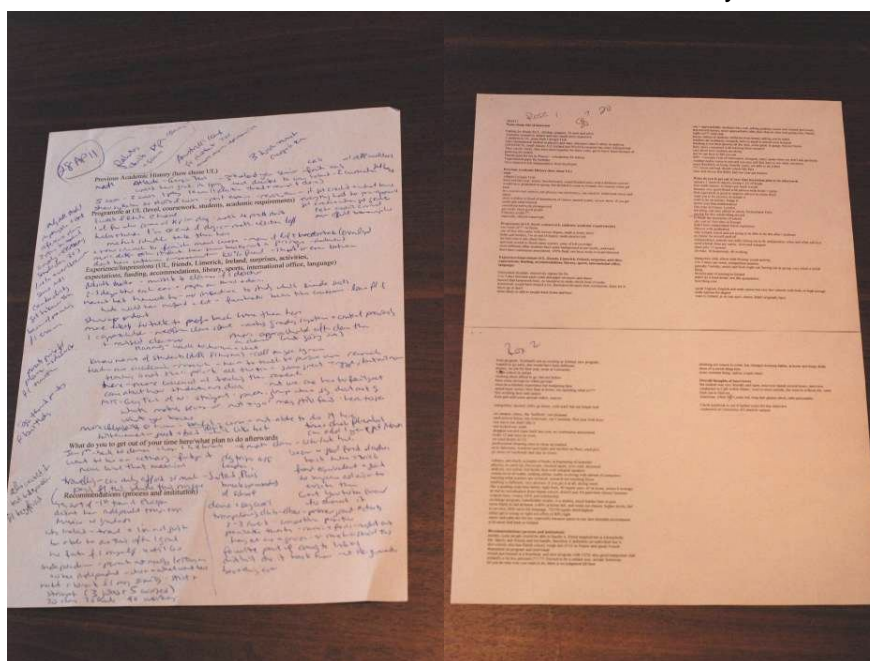
Within the context of an interview, there are usually two participants, the interviewer and the interviewee. Benson and Hughes (1983: 74) describe the interview as a 'social encounter' because within this dialogue the participants 'provide verbal data'. The content and details of the conversation become, in a larger sense, the topics of discussion throughout my *immram*. Verbal data can be collected by tape-recording the conversations or through a process of taking notes. I was unable to audio-record interviews because they were usually conducted in large and noisy cafés. My recorder was not sophisticated enough to separate one or two voices from the overall background. I printed off the interview schedule (Photo 46) and used these as the framework for copious note-taking. After the interview was completed, I made quick notes regarding how the interview went, and my overall general impressions. I then used dictation software to transcribe my notes, but this had several drawbacks. The software I used, 'Dragon Naturally Speaking', did not completely understand my speech and inserted seemingly random words into the text. By going back over them and comparing the handwritten notes to this typed document, I was able to correct the mistakes. A challenge inherent to note-taking is that full sentences are difficult to reconstruct from natural speech that is rapid and fragmented (Sanjek 1990). These notes became necessarily truncated as a result.

In writing up the narrative that would be used for analysis in this thesis, I concentrated on crafting a sense of who the student was in the first instance: who they were, where they were from, what they were doing in Ireland, and what they hoped to get out their experiences studying abroad. Once I established this biographical positioning, a theme emerged from each interview. I then reconstructed important sentences or ideas that reflected this theme. Finally, I combined *immrama* if they shared a theme, or had complementary themes, and presented them in this thesis in the even-numbered chapters. When these themes coincided with my discussion of my survey data, I compared student reflexivity to assess the consistency of the experience. I chose to keep the *immrama* separate from the main body of the thesis in order to retain their own words as much as possible.

Anthropologists rely on notes as texts that stimulate memory. Notes have been employed historically for four reasons: ‘storing, sorting, summarizing, and selecting’ (Blair 2004: 85). In every successive iteration, notes are created as texts that can be compared with other references. Within the field of anthropology, quick scribbles in the moment are re-written and expanded once the anthropologist finds a quiet place and has an opportunity to reflect on her experiences. Historically this was done by typing handwritten notes, even if this caused duress to the ethnographer or her informants, as in the case of Briggs (1970), who would sit in an unheated igloo to type with frozen fingers in the Canadian arctic. These notes were then re-read upon leaving the field, and rewritten to be incorporated in an ethnographic monograph. My own process of note-taking is similar to this mode of recording the everyday events of fieldwork rather than the modern conventions of recording devices and computers that capture more nuanced ways of speaking (Bernard 2006). Whether more traditional or modern note-taking style is chosen, Clifford (1990) suggests that there are three forms of notes: inscription, transcription, and description. Inscription is typical of participant observation where quick notes written are used for later recollection or referring to a list of questions that the ethnographer is trying to answer. These notes are made and remade in relation to each other, and to other sources of data or secondary literature. Transcription is a more formal process of asking a question and recording the answer. This process is prevalent during interviews in which the ethnographer is trying to record a story. Finally, description is a coherent representation of a social reality, that most often uses the other forms of notes as a foundation for the descriptive process. My prevalent form of note-taking was the transcription process, not of an audio or video file, but translating my inscribed notes into a transcription that would become the foundation for my descriptive process in the *immrama* of this thesis. My returning to my notes, note-books, and readings is similar to what Phipps (2010: 109) has characterised as echoes, where ‘waiting [...] and working with the echoes may allow [...] a way of reflecting on the languages of experience and their sensory confusion’. These echoes inspire connections between research texts, the ethnographic thesis, and I imagine more writing to come as I return to these notes in future analyses.

Jordan (2001) has suggested that note-taking by ethnographers creates several types of notes: hastily scribbled, impressionistic scratch notes; taken from and about anthropological literature; and analytic notes. By combining all three forms of notes, ethnographers create ‘a cumulative, organically growing body of field notes [...] which help researchers to conceptualise and make sense of what they are observing and hearing’ (Jordan 2001: 43). Notes are one of several forms of text that I analysed in this thesis in conjunction with quantitative studies and other secondary sources. In the end, all of my forms of note-taking were highly factual in nature rather than impressionistic. This had not been my intention, but is a common challenge for anthropologists. Larsen (2010: 70) found a similar outcome during her fieldwork in Norway when she stated that ‘although I aimed at rich description of what occurred as interesting situations, there was little or no mention of my own feelings or reactions to the events’.

Photo 46: Interview schedule – versions of the same text before they became *immrama*.



The final version of this *immram* can be found in Section 4.1.

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This limitation was overcome by creating my *immram*, however. In reading over my notes, my memory was triggered not only in relation to individual interviews, but to

other personal experiences as well. Larsen had a similar experience when she states that ‘reading these “factual” notes nevertheless triggered a whole range of emotions. And, as memories descended upon me and I relived my year in the countryside, I came to realise that I had possibly touched upon some of the same experiences and challenges that villagers themselves have faced’ (Larsen 2010: 70). By incorporating my interactions with and impressions of both my informants and the experiences they reported, I am better able to write my intertextual ethnographic analysis in this thesis.

As I was writing up my thesis, using the narrative form in the *immram*, it was important to generate accounts of my interviews where I was able to interweave my thoughts and experiences because I was writing an important source of data based on my personal experience of meeting the informant. This technique allowed me to contextualise each student as a dynamic young adult within a larger study by creating personalised narrative texts. This also creates a form of data inherently comparable with my own *immram*, which is why I have incorporated and compared the students’ *immrama* into my own story. In this fashion, the *immrama* become a product of cultural translation. That is to say ‘cultural translation is not a question of replacing text with text (although this may well form part of the endeavour) but of co-creating text, of producing a written version of a lived reality, and it is in this sense that it can be powerfully transformative of those who take part’ (Jordan 2002: 98). In the following section I describe the social encounter that facilitated that transformation: the interview.

9.5.2 The interview as a social encounter

Traditionally, analyses of study abroad programmes such as the GLOSSARI project (Sutton & Rubin 2010) and the *World of Learning* (CBIE 2009) studies have relied on post-programme evaluations and questionnaires in order to assess programmes. I sought to complement these studies by conducting interviews with international students currently undertaking their studies abroad. Interviews are not always objective representations of reality because semi-structured interviews could be considered deficient in ethnographic analysis. This is because interviewees and interviewers construct responses and follow-up

questions unconsciously, that is to say without a clearly defined set of interactions or consistency in their application. Both parties can react in the moment, and may say things that they had not intended to say or even change the topic of conversation entirely (Kvale 1996).

This can make interviewing a rather messy process, and I have tried to outline this messiness throughout this thesis. Adler and Adler (1998: 99) note, from an ethnomethodological point of view, that data collected in the interview process should be seen ‘as mere “accounts,” valueless for their purpose because of the problems of subject bias, self-deception, lack of insight, and dishonesty’. However, having completed my fieldwork I disagree with the Adlers’ position. I consider interviews an integral strategy as part of this research design as it allows informants to contribute to my analytic understanding of study abroad experiences through the reflexive opportunities offered in the interview process. The verbal data is vital as contradictions between survey data and participant observations could only be clarified through direct questioning, which the interview process allows. I agree with Skinner (2010: 117) that ‘an interview is alive, active, transformative and, in its narrative, there is an inevitable change to the interviewee’s memories: healing, reinforcement, reappraisal, remembering and re-authoring in the telling of stories’. I have tried to represent this transformational nature in the *immrama* sections, reflecting how each student influenced my understanding of studying abroad. Therefore, this is not a limitation or liability for an anthropologist of education. It allows each informant to choose which stories he or she wished to narrate in relation to my research project.

This thesis is heavily reliant on data collected through interviewing students as they moved through Ireland. Dunne *et al.* (2005: 27) have suggested that ‘the use of interviews in research suggests that the views and interpretations of certain social actors are important to your research questions’. I have aimed throughout this thesis to use the voices of the students I interviewed to create a rich picture of their experiences studying abroad. Interviews can be challenging, however, and I wish to reflect on interviewing as a research method. It was important to me to maintain the students’ voices as much as possible in

order to identify the key words that they use reflexively to place themselves within a social world and create a new *adult* identity. Jordan (2002: 101) suggests that this is a focus on 'ethnosemantics, a linguistically oriented approach to ethnographic interviewing which involves the study of key words used by informants to talk about their worlds'. In so doing, I was able to concentrate on the concepts that the students felt were important, rather than trying to impose an analytical framework onto their responses.

Interviewing cannot fully capture the essence of the entire conversation, which ultimately has an effect on the account that is then later produced by the interviewer. This 'verbal data' is 'coded and processed' by an ethnographer so that she can make 'objective typifications' about the data gathered from the interview process (Benson & Hughes 1983: 74). The assumption that 'objective typifications' can be made about specific interview situations is an inherently flawed one, since each interview is unique, and therefore generalisations can strip specific interviews of their meaning since facial expressions, emphasis, tones, and so on are absent from the written account. As my interview notes transitioned from hastily scribbled notes to audio dictation to *immram*, each student's account was necessarily framed by my own experiences and in comparison with my other interviewees. Complete objectivity is, therefore, elusive.

An interview is a communication activity in which a social encounter is being recorded for future research. Through oral or written communication, human beings enter into social interactions that construct the social world by using language. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) have suggested that an interview is a social encounter with formal structure and practices. The goal of a formal interview is to produce accounts that can be compared with other interviews to create typifications for research purposes. However, the anthropological interview is not without interpretation, and therefore must be analysed just as any other form of data.

I was able to interview 26 of 78 (33.3%) potential students (Table 4). While each interview was tailored to each interviewee, a semi-structured schedule was employed as a basis to provide comparable results and prompt further discussion (Appendix 2). Each

interview took on average forty minutes to complete. Every effort was made to make the interviewee as comfortable as possible, as it can be intimidating to be interviewed before rapport is established. By conducting the interviews in large cafés around campus, neutral public spaces were used to provide safety and anonymity for students who participated. This was all done in order to make the interview a success because, because as Kemp and Ellen (1984: 230) note, ‘it is important to adopt the same care when it comes to details of context, arranging times and generally setting-up interviews, even the most casual’. While ideally it is helpful to have immediate rapport with your informants that was generally not the case for my interviews. There will always be people eager to talk to strangers, but others can be shy and this directly affects the depth and quality of data that can be collected through interviews. I found that spending a few minutes in a cafeteria line with the student as I purchased coffee or tea for both of us, without my notebook or pen, helped immensely in beginning to generate rapport. After an extremely difficult interview with Henry and Irene (Section 7.2.1), I decided not to do any further group interviews. We had arranged to meet at a café that had closed early, and in the time it took to walk to another cafeteria and purchase coffees, I had covered almost my entire interview schedule. Once we were seated Irene answered questions succinctly, which had a termination effect on that particular line of questioning and excluded Henry’s contributions. They effectively only created one truncated narrative, rather than two reflexive *immrama*. It is for this reason that while I have included their tribulations in my analysis, I was unable to craft their *immram* to the same degree as those included in the even-numbered chapters. I only included in the *immrama* for those students whose narratives were conducive to the style and whose stories related directly to my discussion in this thesis.

Sharing the sociolinguistic and historical backgrounds of your informants can aid in understanding the responses of informants both during interviews and during periods of data analysis. This commonality can also serve to put informants at ease, and facilitate the establishment of rapport. For example, Shah (2004) argues that a shared cultural identity is less threatening and shared cultural knowledge enables the researcher room to manoeuvre, and an awareness of taboos, thus avoiding embarrassment and breakdown of the relationship (cited in Basit 2013: 6). Establishing that rapport can be challenging, however,

as students might find personal questions that are not related to their educational activities, ‘to be perceived as intrusive, inappropriate, and rude and would have resulted in the termination of the interview’ (Skinner 2010: 115). As I note in the interview with Henry and Irene (Section 7.2.1), it is impossible to know if this was one of the causes for the short and abrupt nature of their replies. This interview can be considered a ‘failed interview’ (Nairn *et al.* 2005) that contributed to my ethnography nonetheless.

All students were recruited in writing to participate in this project; either through e-mail or the messaging system of social networking sites (Appendix 3). Students agreed to be interviewed for this project in reply to the written invitation. After the interview was completed, I explained the overall research project, and detailed how their interview responses might be included in an anonymised form in the final analyses, whether in this thesis or in future academic publications. Participation was voluntary, and the details of students who did not consent to the written invitation for an interview or questionnaire were removed from the dataset that were collected during the fieldwork period. Table 6 represents the demographic make-up of students whom I interviewed in relation to their country of origin, gender, and age from the United States and Canada. I was able to conduct 19 semi-structured interviews with North American students (out of 26 total interviews with students from around the world).

Table 6: Gender and age statistics of interviewees

Country	Gender	19-20	21-25	Total
Canada	Male	1	2	3
	Female	2	3	5
United States	Male	1	1	2
	Female	3	6	9
Total		7	12	19

As with any study, the methods employed influence which kinds of data are included or excluded from the analysis. Selection criteria were applied to determine which data would be analysed. In this thesis, I included interviews with 21 students who were from around the world, and studying in Ireland during one academic year (Table 5). The

students whom I was able to interview as the central/legitimate source of ‘truth’ could convey their thoughts about learning through wandering. By also adding my thoughts about my own similar experiences, I became what Kvale (1996: 4, emphasis in original) considers to be a travelling interviewer, a person who ‘wanders along with the local inhabitants, asks questions that lead the subjects to tell their own stories of their lived world, and converse with them in the original Latin meaning of *conversation* as “wandering together with”’. By connecting these stories and integrating them into my *immram* of doctoral fieldwork, I am better able to understand the experiences of my informants. I combine conversations arising in interviews with participant observation and an online questionnaire in order to generate a set of rich data with which to work.

9.5.3 An observant wanderer

Participant observation creates a different form of data collected through interviewing. Dunne *et al.* (2005: 67) suggest that observational data allows the fieldworker to create a narrative ‘text by selecting and sequencing’ to tell a story. To gain a fuller reading of the experiences of study abroad students, my participant observations relied on several techniques to elucidate and comprehend daily life and experiences of my informants. DeWalt and DeWalt (2002) define participant observation within ethnographic research as the practice of spending an extended period of time living with informants, experiencing the same routines, and learning local languages and dialects. Researchers should be observing and participating in all leisure, professional, and familial activities, conversing with and interviewing all those present, taking copious notes, and using the observations made during this process as the foundation for ethnographic analysis and writing. I wandered through higher education contexts alongside my participants. The requirement of personal experience and reflection determined a need for an extended stay and extensive fieldwork in Ireland. Given that I was participating in both the lives of other students and in my own life at the same time, these experiences as international students could be used to mediate and analyse the data collected throughout this project in conjunction with reflexivity. This approach reflects Tonkin’s (1984: 221) conception of the use of participant observation because ‘one uses experience to further observation, by experimenting on

oneself'. To this end, it was imperative that I also incorporate my own experiences with both interviews and a questionnaire in order to better understand the data collected during participant observation throughout this thesis.

Once I had organised my field site, I conducted participant observation with a cohort of students, attending classes, special lectures, and a 'research in progress' seminar series. I also presented a lecture on the Europeanisation of higher education through the Bologna Process to a Master's level class; and a lecture to the senior undergraduate politics students on the development of a political economy of knowledge in Europe and the impact this has had on the Irish economy. This placed me slightly removed from my cohort in a position as a teacher, but also served to open access for dialogue. For example, the economic crisis had just begun, and my lecture to a class of senior undergraduates opened an opportunity for them to ask me about finding work in Canada and share their plans to emigrate upon graduation.

In concert with the semi-structured interviews, I conducted participant observation in order to create a second source of data for comparison that I have included in my *immram*. This technique allowed me to create a rich ethnographic and intertextual data set that I could organise by selecting stories and 'sequences of actions into narratives' that would bring the reader with me through international student spaces (Dunne *et al.* 2005: 70).

The reflexivity involved in participant observation allowed for the collection of data supposedly 'free from subject's whimsical shifts in opinion, self-evaluation, self-deception, manipulation of self-presentation, embarrassment, and outright dishonesty' (Adler & Adler 1998: 105). I say supposedly because research rarely went as planned, and this method is often limited to the imagination of the ethnographer. Ideally, full participation in the activities of these international students would have been conducted, including attendance for the entire course, living amongst the students for the duration of their studies, and participating in impromptu student organised events. Unfortunately, I was unable to gain such comprehensive access to participate as well in institutionalised activities.

9.5.4 Questionnaire

To complement the qualitative data collected during the research process, I devised an online questionnaire (Appendix 4) near the end of the project to examine the frequency and variety of experiences among students who could not be contacted through any other means. Data collected from this survey were later compared to the results from independent contemporaneous surveys in order to determine the personal characteristics of international students in Ireland, their academic and leisure activities, and compare those to other international and European surveys of students (OECD 2006; ESU 2009; EI 2010). Quantitative research tools, such as online questionnaires and statistical reports, can complement educational ethnographies because ‘they offer an important source of supporting and contextualising data against which the more qualitative data may be viewed’ (Pole & Morrison 2003: 50). This technique created another form of textual data that could be compared with my autoethnographic vignettes (Humphreys 2005), my student *immrama*, and my notes.

The survey was deployed between March and June 2009 electronically, and the survey was sent to the international education offices of all major Irish universities and the 34 international offices that had formalised exchange programmes with UL, representing a minimum of 2,636 surveys sent to students worldwide. Ideally, students were to be included from the previous academic year as well (2007/2008 and 2008/2009) in order to identify any variance of experiences between universities and between years. Unfortunately, I did not receive any completed surveys from the 2007/2008 cohort. A total of 107 surveys were returned, which represents a response rate of 0.04% (maximum). Responses were excluded if the student studied in Ireland outside of the prescribed academic period, if they had never studied in Ireland, and duplicate records. Full-degree students were included in the survey and the analysis in this thesis. I have changed the spelling or grammar to maintain the thought and language patterns of their responses, but also for the ease of reading.

In total, North American students that are analysed in this thesis completed 40 usable questionnaires. This represents a 0.015% response rate. Of these 40 respondents, 36 (90%) were female and four (10%) male (Table 7). However, only 27 students who completed the entire survey agreed for their responses to be included in my analysis, who were also American or Canadian in origin and studied during the relevant period.

Table 7: Gender and age statistics of questionnaire respondents

Country	Gender	19-20	21-25	26-30	31-35	36-40	41-45	Total
Canada	Male	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
	Female	1	1	2	0	0	1	5
United States	Male	1	2	0	0	0	0	3
	Female	10	20	1	0	0	0	31
Total		12	24	3	0	0	1	40

One drawback of online surveys is that the researcher is not able to follow up regarding incomplete surveys (Evans & Mathur 2005). Additionally, as circumstances change, such as graduation, current contact information may not have been available for former students. It is, therefore, impossible to confirm that the students in fact received the 2,636 invitations. Through online dissemination, however, some students were reached who would otherwise not have been included in my analysis. A comparison of the resulting texts from interview and questionnaire responses confirmed that students were equally reflexive in their responses in-person, and online. Such similarity corroborates that any potential power relationship drawbacks caused by in-person interviews with a visiting research fellow have been mitigated. Indeed, the responses reflect Shields' (2003: 408) conclusion 'that some of the inhibitions and self-censoring that may be present during other forms of data collection seemed to have been minimised in the web-based data collection process. Student responses were rich, detailed, evocative, self-revelatory, and sensitive'. As a result, this tool became one of several methods used as part of the virtual ethnographic methods employed in the project. I did break with anthropological tradition by deploying

this survey at the end of my fieldwork and not at the beginning as an orientation tool (Wolcott 1999: 53). I found this to be extremely helpful in refining my analysis of my texts. The use of social media and technology have changed since Wolcott wrote that surveys be used at the beginning of a project, and this methodology suggests that technology will change the way data is collected in the future.

At the end of the survey, I asked students to tell me what they thought about the survey itself as well. This was the first time I had designed a survey, and I was anxious to assess its usefulness as a research tool. The survey took approximately 20 minutes to complete and students reported that it was boring, too long, and that the skip logic did not operate properly. This was frustrating because I had tested the survey before it was sent to students but it seems to still have had some kinks. In the future, I will spend more time designing the survey, and creating an accessible database to facilitate data analysis that I had not considered in its design. Despite this, it was a useful tool to assess the veracity and consistency of my respondents because it generated pieces of text that could be compared with my in-person fieldwork.

9.5.5 Virtual ethnography

New to Ireland myself, I was challenged by the problem of how to identify a statistically significant number of extremely mobile students without the aid of an international office providing a formal introduction to the students. To this end, I identified that many of these students who were in different classes, participated in different social clubs, and travelled to different parts of Europe, were all using the same social networking site, 'Facebook', to locate other students studying abroad, and to organise travelling clubs, and social events. So I also used 'Facebook' as a means of making contacts.

Participants included in this study were self-selecting in several respects. In the first instance, access to personal computers and the internet is not universal (Resmer *et al.* 1995). Secondly, social networking sites are often regionally specific. For example, Irish

students were more likely to use the site 'Bebo' while North American students were likely to use 'Facebook' (Boyd & Ellison 2007). This self-selecting process results in the identification of students with similar socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. Speaking solely about virtual communities, Silva (2002: 138) has argued that on-line communities 'are communities in the making – they are so because of the media used – the context within which they operate'. I would push this argument one step further, and suggest that new combinations of virtual and in-person participation construct new, adapting, and transient communities for further research. My informants used the internet to identify one another, but once the physical community was established, reliance on virtual tools to identify potential friends and activities was reduced until after their studies were completed, where some students then returned to social networking sites to reminisce and maintain the sense of community amongst members who are now geographically dispersed.

The benefits of using online tools as part of this research project included gaining further access to informants who would only be in Ireland a short time. E-mail provided a level of continued access to informants met while on fieldwork, and helped to increase the potential pool of informants through online interviews. Mann and Stewart (2007: 17) suggest that this is one of the key features of using computer-mediated communication (CMC) as a research method because it 'is a practical way to interview, or collect narratives from, individuals or groups who are geographically distant.' Conducting interviews online broadened my sources for data collection, eliminated the need for transcription, and by association removed transcription bias. The challenges Mann and Stewart (2007: 26-30) outlined were also relevant to this project: computer literacy of both the researcher and the informants was vital to this strategy, making contact with informants and recruiting them into the project, and potentially losing access to informants over the course of the interview. This may contribute to the over-representation of female participants in my case study, as well as the national characteristics of students.

The limitations of employing social networking sites to identify participants to include in a study were that not all students use such tools, or use them to the same degree in relation to establishing and maintaining friendship networks (for example Ellison *et al.*

2007). In this sense, while it is a useful tool in identifying predominantly North American students, most other nationalities were not represented in my sample. Similarly, not all students have regular access to the internet, and the university libraries in Ireland, where students might seek to use the internet, often prohibited access to social networking sites. In spite of this, I considered the online activities of students as an important source of information because Orgard (2005: 52) has established that using various methods, both online and offline, allows the researcher to triangulate data and test responses from informants because using both methods is 'a way of contextualizing and adding authenticity to the findings obtained online'.

Online ethnography is not new to anthropological analysis. Fischer (2006: 4) suggested that resources can be located that provide quantitative and qualitative data for such projects when he states that 'if we are to identify a distinctive synergy of computer methods within anthropology, it will most likely be in the collection, reporting, and analysis of ethnographic data'. Within anthropological research on temporary migration, the roles of computers, and indeed the World Wide Web, were pivotal for both myself as the ethnographer and for the students alike (Bernard 2011). As a researcher, I was able to collect data that is only available from the internet and use computers to analyse those data, just as my informants did to research their trips, plan and reflect upon the experience using an electronic medium. This reflects traditional touristic behaviour outlined in Parrinello's (2001: 207) conceptualisation of tourist movement as well when he notes several stages within the touristic process that now often involve interaction with the internet: pre-trip anticipation, travel to the destination, on-site behaviour, return travel, recollection, and feedback about their experiences. These were present in the online behaviour of my informants who were using social networking sites.

I have chosen not to directly include students' online activity in this thesis, however, because for my purposes, face-to-face interaction was preferable. Instead, I engaged with multiple sites in order to identify students activities generally, which supplement general educational opportunities provided for university students in relation to their coursework such as the libraries, social spaces, and social networking sites (de Villiers

2010). In this particular context, however, independent social activities comprised those activities outside the parameters of the formal classroom of students: of social groups for educational enrichment. The distinctions between 'public' and 'private', and 'published' vs. 'unpublished' is difficult to manage in relation to student activity on social networking sites (Boss *et al.* 2009). The anonymity of informants is compromised if online content and activities are included in my analysis because personal profiles identify name, gender, university, graduating class, and international cohort information. This ultimately led to my decision to examine online activities, but not to include texts from those activities in my analysis.

This combination of online, in-person, and inter-library services enabled me to locate significant literature in relation to studying abroad, transformative learning, educational tourism, intercultural competences, and ethnographic practices. Recommendations by other researchers, and my supervisors, and use of keywords in search engines and databases enabled me to find additional materials, previous studies, and disciplinary literature in the fields of inter-cultural learning, social geography, and educationalist literature. By combining data and resources, I was able to create a unique approach to understanding the study abroad experience.

9.5.6 Research ethics

I employed the ethical guidelines established by the Association of Social Anthropologists (ASA 1999) during this research project. Within this ethical framework, my choice of participant observation and semi-structured interviews was dependent upon several factors, including access to conduct research amongst students, financial considerations, and periods of reflection necessary to complete the research. No students involved in the research were required to participate. Participant observation was employed in order to maximise potential contact with students who were in Ireland for between four to twelve months. Recruitment of participants was done informally, through in-person invitation, internet connections, and personal recommendations. As mobile students, their responses as

part of the project should not affect their academic standing as such because their responses are anonymised in the analysis sections of this thesis, which was submitted after the students had completed their own studies. As a result, every effort was made to protect the confidentiality, anonymity, and privacy of informants. The names of individuals were changed throughout this thesis in order to protect the identities of individual students but the universities may be specified in order to compare their focus and interest.

The process of anonymisation has caused difficulties in relation to the obscuring of place (Nespor 2000) and of people (Walford 2002) within educational settings. Indeed, uniform data are rare in relation to this type of study as each participant brings different experiences to the analysis that may be lost if obscured by anonymisation. I have chosen a middle ground in this thesis to protect the identities of the students I have interviewed. Their own personal biographic information is generalised, but I have not chosen to anonymise the location of my fieldwork because location may have had a direct bearing on student activities and perceptions of Ireland in general, and the cities in which they live in particular, which could be an interesting follow-up project. As a result, each student is contextualised in broadly geographic terms in conjunction with their personal narratives in *immrama* form to better present their reflections in relation to the arguments of this thesis, and to the *immrama* of other students. While informant profiles are sketched throughout this thesis to provide personal characteristics of relevant informants, anonymisation should protect their privacy.

9.6 Analysis through comparison

Regardless of the technique employed, tools utilised, and depth of available research, the subjectivity of the researcher is always a limitation to the study. Johnson *et al.* (2004) suggest four dialogic movements that can be particularly insightful when it comes to analysing interview data for comparison purposes. First, they suggest employing memory as a mechanism to pick out significant episodes from fieldwork experiences, including reflecting on how fieldwork influenced hunches and subsequent revisions of methods and creating a series of indexes to combine similar and contrasting episodes. I re-read my notes

from my interviews at the end of each day to reframe my interview schedule with new data in mind. Once I began to write my thesis, I re-read my notes and interview transcriptions, and brought the *immrama* of some students together to tease out themes from their responses. Second, Johnson *et al.* suggest reflecting on how the transcriptions have been created, the coding that has been developed, and reflect on the patterns that the ethnographer has begun to develop. This was done along theoretical lines, fitting the themes of transformational learning, educational tourism, and intercultural competences to the stories of each student, thereby identifying whether a student spoke to these issues, and if so how their ideas corresponded to the other students I interviewed. I did not use pre-determined coding, but rather looked for vocabulary that the students employed themselves, reflecting their own forms of expression. The use of student vocabulary served to limit the relevant secondary literature that informed my analysis, but this drawback was tempered with recommendations from colleagues, my supervisors, and my examiners. Third, key episodes must be selected in order to compare social activities, recreate their contexts, and represent both the research and the informant. It was in this stage that I collected the *immrama* of my informants together, and combined them with my own, similar stories, in order to create a rich sense of educational experiences of North American students in Ireland. Finally, writing itself represents a dialogue between the ethnographer and her informants, listening to both, and then bringing the dialogue to a reading audience. It is my hope that by including the *immrama* that I have collected and crafted in this thesis, I can bring the reader along my doctoral journey, and provide some depth to the people I have met along the way.

Photo 47: The ethnographer at her desk.



Source: © The Author, 2013.

With so many potential subjects, I developed a series of selection criteria in order to frame what would be studied and developed strategies to follow those objects of interest. The collected data was then compared for the purposes of analysis in my thesis. Marcus (1998: 86) contends that multi-sited ethnography is inherently comparative in nature because it attempts to 'posit logics of relationship, translation, and association' between a 'fractured, discontinuous plane of movement and discovery among sites as one maps objects of study'. I have chosen to use comparison at several stages within this project. Comparison is built into the study by examining several subjects in international education, such as summer schools, study abroad programmes, independent migration, and formal exchange programmes during the selection process. In the writing of this thesis, I use comparisons amongst students from different institutions in order to highlight relevant discussions. While male students were included in this analysis, the majority of comparisons are between female students because of female over-representation both in my sample and in the overall student demographics. This makes clear gender comparison impossible.

Vogt (2002: 25) has identified the necessity of comparison within ethnography as part of 'making sense of data at the data analysis stage [... which] involves analysing and representing multiple perspectives, as well as integrating data from different methods'. This is done to identify and make sense of 'emerging themes, discourses, actions, feelings and views without aiming at the development of an all-encompassing theory' (Vogt 2002: 29). Comparison was vital to this process, therefore, because I begin 'only with small, theoretically defined sets of cases, and then compare[s] cases with each other as wholes to arrive at modest generalizations, usually about historical origins and outcomes, concerning relatively narrow classes of phenomenon' (Ragin 1987: 31). These comparisons are on individual levels, amongst the participating students, between the interviewed students, myself, and with other available studies of international student experiences.

The limitation of this approach is that alternative interpretations may not be recognised because many students lack the opportunity to participate. Throughout the

thesis, I have endeavoured to find as many comparative cases as possible, in terms of my key field sites as well as research conducted by others, in order to limit such deficiencies in this method. The shifting research focus of this project also helped to guard against ethnocentric interpretations of the data. For example, I was initially interested only in the travel patterns of international students. However, through the process of conducting interviews in multiple locations, I realised that I needed further data regarding the experience such international travel had on the development of the individual, which became the focus of the thesis. This shift was necessitated by the data collected in interviews; my initial researcher interest towards tourism was overtaken by the emerging experiences of transformative and intercultural learning that students reported in many interviews.

9.7 *Ethnography and the writing process*

Dunne *et al* (2005: 130) have suggested ‘three basic models of research writing; these might be termed the objective, the subjective, and the socially determined’. Objective writing is popular in the natural sciences, which aims to create naturalistic and scientific mirrors of reality. Subjective writing, the category in which my thesis would fall, is epistemologically grounded in the idea that authors can only represent their own experiences. Socially determined writing privileges the text and discourses over the role of the author. My *immram* in this thesis represents a form of autoethnographic writing, which has been defined as ‘writing that used as a foundation the auto-(self), -ethno- (the sociocultural connection), -graphy (the application of the research process)’ (Wall 2008: 29). I agree with Dunne *et al.* (2005: 21) that this type of written reflexivity is necessary in subjective research writing because as ethnographers we can only write about our own, personal experiences ‘because it is the conscious self that experiences’ (Dunne *et al.* 2005: 21). This is especially important in the case of a female ethnographer because women have often had their work challenged (such as the case of Mead introduced in Section 3.2) and discounted as insufficiently rigorous. As a result, Tedlock (2000: 468) has observed that ‘women’s ethnographic and autobiographical intentions are often powered by the motive to

convince readers of the author's self-worth, to clarify and authenticate their self-images'. Lerum (2001) has called this 'academic armor'. I use this opportunity to pause a moment and reflect on how I was motivated to write this thesis and how I have been influenced by earlier ethnographic texts.

9.7.1 Ethnographic memory

My approach to ethnographic writing reflects the genre of 'narrative ethnography' where life histories and memoirs are blended to create an analytical text (Tedlock 2003: 173). In the tradition of Crapanzano (1985) and McCarthy Brown (2001), I constructed individual narratives of the sixty students who participated in my study, that I then used as the foundation for comparison and analysis. By representing the stories I collected alongside my own story, I seek to create individual *immram* similar to the traditional texts of Irish wanderers outlined in Section 1.4. Student stories recount both who they are and their experiences in overcoming the risks associated with studying abroad as they journeyed through Irish educational and social spaces. By collecting these *immrama*, I endeavour to provide an accurate sketch of international experiences of students who are mobile, aligned with Crapanzano's (1977: 4) view of ethnography:

The life historical text is a product of its author's desire for recognition... It is not simply informative but evocative as well. Its evaluation requires the understanding of the relationship between the author of the text and the Other, the inevitable interlocutor, whom he is at least symbolically addressing.

The *immrama* in my thesis complement the narrative that I have constructed about my own experiences which are reconstructed throughout my *immram* by consulting my field notes to jog my memory of places, people, and events. By including my own stories alongside those of my informants I am able to locate myself in the field in the Geertzian sense of 'being there' (Geertz 1988). I have recounted stories of my experiences in Ireland and my travels farther abroad in an effort to better contextualise my fieldwork techniques and conclusions. I am simultaneously tested as I write this thesis to also account for the 'tensions linked to how "being *there*" can be worked into a text that may be written many

years later' (Coleman 2010: 215). Indeed, my literature review and fieldwork periods covered several years, and I have spent several years crafting this ethnographic thesis. The data I collected stimulates memories and fosters the creation of connections amongst them, but also in relation to my own experiences. By representing my mental work in narrative form I am able to recall forgotten memories as Coleman (2010: 219) suggests:

For Bloch, individuals may not be fully aware at any given moment of what they might remember, so that certain memories that appeared to be totally lost can be retrieved when the person concerned re-enters the emotional state they were in when the original event occurred.

I have not organised the *immrama* chronologically, however. By crafting my *immram* around memories that link together, I am able to create and recreate the stories of my informants as they move through space and time. This technique relies on the ability 'of being able to tell the right story at the right time', reflect upon them, and compare them to other stories (Collins 2010: 237). Memory is an integral aspect of the ethnographic tradition because it is the tool we use, as writers, to connect the various forms of data we have collected to generate an intertextual ethnography. Phipps (2010: 107) has characterised the process of remembering 'labyrinthine; one triggers another as I write'. Certainly as I wrote the *immrama* of my informants, I was inspired to write one of my own, based upon similar memories that seemed to weave back onto themselves. Therefore, when writing our ethnographies we must combine memory and data in order to:

[R]econstitute experiences as story, which the memory compresses and catalogues as script. Social interaction, including that which is involved in conducting ethnographic fieldwork, is unimaginable without memory. (Collins 2010: 239)

Memory was an integral aspect to the medieval *immrama* as well where monks recorded the stories of their masters for posterity. The writing up process for any thesis is always retrospective, written only after the fieldwork is complete. Each event is remembered, and the triggers for these memories can be field notes, trinkets, or subsequent events that are similar in nature. This shift in temporality has been rarely represented until recently because new expectations for the inclusion of reflexivity in the text now allows

ethnographic texts to ‘contain tensions linked to how “being *then*” can be worked into a text that may be written many years later’ (Coleman 2010: 215). This was a challenge for me given that I completed my fieldwork in 2009 but submitted the final draft of this thesis in 2013.

Once an event, an experience, a statement, or an artefact has been remembered, the writer must make sense of its importance and where it might connect to the larger thesis. Dunne *et al.* (2005: 137) have defined ‘sensemaking’ as ‘the process of reflection and analysis that creates a text’. Each story must be weighed for its importance, and compared with the other stories that have been selected for analysis. Once the desired stories have been selected, the ethnographer must interpret the importance or significance that story provides the reader. By incorporating my own *immram* with those of my informants, I have created a semi-autoethnographic text because my knowledge is intertwined with the stories of my fieldwork and the experiences of my informants.

9.7.2 Storytelling

Stories are both a source of data and a meaningful mechanism that allows the reader to empathise with the protagonists. Storytelling has been important in many societies throughout history. At its fundamental level, Ingold (2011: 160-1) suggests:

To know someone or something is to know their story, and to be able to join that story to one’s own. Yet, of course, people grow in knowledge not only through direct encounters with others, but also through hearing their stories told.

This is precisely what I endeavour to do in writing the *immrama* found in this thesis. The stories of each student’s experiences give the readers a common space with which to reflect upon my analysis. This is similar to the storytelling techniques of the Canadian Dene, where Legat (2008) identified that the stories of travel experiences allowed the listeners to travel across a barren space without the speaker at a later time and follow the same journey. In this sense, I am sharing these stories with my readers in order to bring them with me

along my analytical process, as well as empathising with my informants. Berger (2001) suggests that this form of autoethnography also enables me to create rapport with my readers.

Readers may come to their own, diverse conclusions, about these stories. This chapter emphasises the need for each ethnographer to write their own ethnography because the personal experiences of the ethnographer impacts the methods of data collection, the focus of attention, and their interpretation of their fieldwork experiences. Jordan (2001: 42) reinforces this when she states that ‘findings are provisional and partial (partial in the sense of incomplete and of subjective); they are the unrepeatable product of a particular group of people and a particular researcher coming together in particular ways at a particular time and over a particular period’. Certainly, both my own field and that of Pink’s informant community in Spain (2000) would not be replicable because the fields are fundamentally centred around ourselves, our interests, and our networks. By incorporating the *immrama*, I enable my readers to make their own journeys with my informants in the hopes that the readers will empathise with them. This is essential because, as Ingold and Vergunst suggest (2008: 6), ‘true knowledge depends on the confirmation of stories in personal experience, and to achieve this one must travel the trails and visit the places of which they tell’. To put it another way, I feel that by examining my own feelings and telling my own story as well, I am better able to identify how my fieldwork experience and my interactions with informants was a self-transformative experience, congruent with the main aspect of my fieldwork being a rite of passage towards ‘professional acclaim’ (Ingold & Vergunst 2008: 29). In my case, I have written a thesis that combines multiple forms of data and methods in order to generate an ethnographic account of my fieldwork experiences as my own rite of passage towards a professional identity.

Jordan reflects on ethnographic writing and highlights the intercultural awareness that arises from not only experience but also through the transmission of those experiences to another person through writing. In the first instance, writing a thesis, an account of research activities, is a ‘process of fieldwork discovery through producing a record of what *I* did, who *I* spoke to, what *I* observed, how people reacted to *me*’ (Jordan 2001: 45,

emphasis in original). My *immram* includes my failures and misunderstandings because the social world is messy, and ethnographers ‘need to be reminded not to sweep everything that offends their conception of order and neatness under the carpet of an unruffled text’ (Jordan 2001: 45). By including my *immram* with this thesis I have tried to create a sense of ‘being there’ (Geertz 1988) for both myself and my readers. I developed a discussion which represents my attempt to ‘hone [my] descriptive skills and to bring to the level of discourse the very texture of the field situation through recording the activities, interactions, sights, sounds, smells, tastes and feelings involved in being there’ (Jordan 2001: 47). In creating a textured narrative that translates experiences, the sense of *being there* is being in the process or the emotions of the experience rather than in the place.

To this end, I include not only narrative structures, but also visual representations such as iconic photographs, maps, and tables to invite the reader to join us on our journeys. Harper (2005: 749) has discussed forms of visual representation that have been used in research findings. One use is in illustrated research articles, where photographs and images describe a situation or highlight its significance. Each of my informants had interests in travelling, and I have tried to represent this interest by combining them with my own to offer an insight into the types of visual representations they were creating. Woitsche employed photos in her thesis (2011) with the distinction that she used photographs that were supplied by her informants. Woitsch was interested in the visual representations of international education experiences. I could not do this due to my decision not to include any online activities of my informants. To include photos that my informants had posted to ‘Facebook’ could compromise their anonymity.

Instead, I used images I made myself. The maps I have included were hand drawn because I enjoy the process of making and colouring maps and the process is more akin to documents made by early wanderers. Similarly, I have tended to include photographs of public buildings from different areas that I visited because I have found them to often represent those values that are important to the city. This is simply a personal fascination with public architecture that has been developing over most of my life through many

conversations with my father, an architect, that has resulted in my interests in human geography (see for example Nielsen 2008b).

By combining memory work, storytelling, and imagery I hope to have created a sense of journey for my readers based in wayfaring practices. Ingold (2007: 75, emphasis in original) has defined wayfaring as taking ‘place in the related fields of *travel*, where wayfaring is replaced by destination-oriented transport, *mapping*, where the drawn sketch is replaced by the route-plan, and *textuality*, where storytelling is replaced by the pre-composed plot’.

9.8 Conclusion

In creating this methodological chapter as a substantive chapter of this thesis I aim to ‘hoist epistemological issues up to the surface of [my] work, continually questioning the status of [my] claims, the way these were arrived at and the ways they are expressed on paper’ (Jordan 2001: 48). I aim to bring my readers with me, along the path I travelled during my fieldwork, and to perform my role as anthropologist by recounting my fieldwork as well as my research findings. In the remaining chapter of this thesis, I explore the implications of my findings and methodology on understanding study abroad experiences as sites of potential transitions to *adulthood* and the role ethnography can play in analysing this phenomenon.

Chapter 10 Implications

I never teach my pupils. I only attempt to provide the conditions in which they can learn.

- Albert Einstein

10.1 Introduction

Research in study abroad experiences is a relatively new field populated by junior researchers. Byram and Feng (2006: 9) have suggested that:

They define their own approach, they invent their own methods, they borrow and replicate, they learn from each other, and more senior researchers need to do the same.

In the previous chapter, I outlined my methodology, my approach, and how these resulted in the creation of an innovative process that might be used in the future. In this chapter, I engage with debates surrounding the nature of educational ethnography and the implications related to my research. My approach is inspired by Ingold (2007: 116) when he states that ‘wayfaring is a movement of self-renewal or becoming rather than transport of an already constituted being from one location to another’. There are parallels between study abroad experiences and the experiences of anthropological fieldwork that will be helpful in understanding these encounters in the future, and I wish to reflect upon each in turn: wandering, writing, and the *field*.

10.2 Wandering

The concept of wandering was extremely useful to understand study abroad experiences of internationally mobile students because it allowed me to contrast travel behaviours of students with how individuals regard the outcomes of such experiences. Specifically, it allowed me to study the importance of travel as catalyst for the development of self-confidence, intercultural competences, and taking advantage of serendipitous opportunities. After analysing my interviews and survey responses, and crafting the *immrama* of this thesis, it is clear that the destination is not as important for fostering a sense of *adulthood*

as the experience itself. Wandering is not a form of holiday leisure, however, and the degree to which students can engage with local residents and overcome daily challenges significantly affects their sense of self-confidence and contributes to personal development. While the main markers of *adulthood* in North American society are employment and parenthood (Settersten 2011), travel abroad and study abroad are not generally accepted as markers. It is for this reason that my thesis examines 'transitions to adulthood'. The students are not adults by virtue of studying abroad, travelling to foreign places, or creating an international friendship network. Rather, these are all opportunities in which students may engage and that form a transition to adulthood.

In Chapter 5, I outlined the travel behaviours of my informants who began by exploring their new surroundings, finding their dormitories, classes, libraries and social spaces such as pubs. Once oriented on campus, they began to explore the local area, eventually expanding their wandering across the island. While some students identified cities as destinations, the majority reflected on their travels in Ireland as 'everywhere', 'a few other places', or 'around'. Such vocabulary represents two complimentary discourses relating to educational tourism. In the first instance, students are looking to travel as an experience in and of itself. Therefore, the actual sites are not as important as physically engaging with Irish social and geographical spaces. Second, it may not be as important to visit specific sites as to travel to as many as possible given time and travel restrictions. This is consistent with Gmelch's students (1997), who reported a tendency to 'map hop' as their important activity, rather than engaging with one city more deeply.

Students began their wandering locally in Ireland, but quickly expanded their destinations into non-English speaking cities once they established confidence in their ability to be tourists without family support structures. They expanded their travels to Italy, Austria, Germany, and France. Once again, however, students did not have clear destinations in mind, and their choices were influenced by the economical pricing of low-cost airlines in what Larsen *et al.* (2006) have characterised as 'accessible playgrounds'. These playgrounds are generally cities that have developed a tourism industry such as Venice, Florence, Rome, Vienna, Salzburg, Munich, Berlin, Prague, or Paris. Their

popularity is based upon their price points and recommendations from friends or family members. Students travel in groups to these destinations, and while they may eat local cuisine, shop for souvenirs, and engage in other expected touristic behaviours, the size of their group may limit their contact with local residents. This behaviour mitigates the risks associated with travel while abroad, but more importantly provides companionship that can prevent a sense of isolation. The intensity of contact seems to have an effect on the intercultural competences an individual student can develop. Group interaction is less effective than individual interaction in a new cultural environment.

Students overcame obstacles associated with everyday life in new settings and in new languages, thereby fostering a sense of independence or autonomy. This independence is not complete, however, as my informants rarely travelled completely alone, but the experiences of overcoming adversities in new places, amongst the company of others who are similarly challenged, does seem to offer opportunities to develop *adult* identities because the students arranged for their own survival and comfort, rather than relying on their family support structures. By travelling, the students experienced new frames of reference, new ways of being, new gender roles, and cultural values that, if reflected upon, may lead a student to re-conceive who they are, and what they want out of life. In overcoming challenges, students reported that they felt a sense of growth, learning, self-reliance, independence, discovery, self-sufficiency, and a sense of experience more generally. This is directly related to transformational learning. They developed greater confidence in their ability to travel, obtain the necessities of daily life, and make friends, but also in their future career paths, and the types of leisure activities they wish to pursue. This reflects the findings of Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1966) and Gmelch (1997) in which self-confidence increased, rather than those of Shupe (2007) or Nash (1976) whose students reported decreased self-confidence. Reflexivity offers students the opportunity to assess their feelings about people and events while not under duress or stress of the moment, whether orally in an interview or in a written diary (Crawshaw *et al.* 2001). The results from traumatic experiences seem to be the most influential, such as in the case of Rose (Section 4.1) and McLeod and Wainwright's students in Scotland (2009) who located medical attention. Studying abroad is a rite of passage that requires the building of a new

home and the development of a new sense of self, which has not yet culminated in *adulthood*.

As I have established in Chapter 7, the greater the student's ability to engage with new frames of reference and incorporate different ideas into the person they would like to become, the greater study abroad experiences affect these transitions towards *adulthood*. As students engage with local residents to overcome daily challenges, make friends with those who do not share their frame or reference, or learn about the socio-historical context of a temporary home, they have the opportunity to develop their intercultural competences. By speaking with local residents in their language, students can develop linguistic competences that can give them more confidence to engage more fully in conversation and speak about more abstract concepts. The more students speak with local residents, the greater their sociolinguistic competences develop, allowing them to assess verbal contexts and employ various forms of verbal communication depending on the social context and relationship between the participating members. These competences contribute to a student's ability to use appropriate strategies to analyse textual documents such as newspapers or research monographs as a form of discursive competence. Students also have the opportunity to develop strategic competences in which they can confirm that they understand the topic under discussion, including strategies of rephrasing, seeking clarifications, and asking appropriate questions. Socio-cultural competences also allow a student to apply their social and cultural understanding to new frames of reference, make comparisons, and assessments based on their personal experiences. Finally, social competences enable students to facilitate these kinds of interactions with others, representing flexibility, adaptability, empathy, and developing a sense of confidence in their intercultural competences. These six competences, developed by Byram (1997) (Section 3.4), were theorised in the context of intercultural learning facilitated by studying abroad, which is the context of this thesis.

Intercultural competences are equally applicable to the context of the disciplinary training of doctoral candidates in the field of anthropology. Doctoral candidates are expected to travel to a new *site*, learn the local language, deconstruct social relationships,

and understand social settings. Doctoral students must recognise the relevance of particular forms of communication, do historical and archival research about the community in which they live, keep abreast of local news and current events, and share their experiences with the wider academic community through their thesis, and other forms of writing such as research articles, op-ed pieces in newspapers, or documentaries. In so doing, they bridge the divide between forms of communication specific to their *field* and those forms from their *home*, and facilitate understanding of both frames of reference.

There are parallels in our wandering as well. Students travelled to Ireland for a period of academic study in Ireland, just as I travelled there for a period of research and fieldwork. We all spent weekdays on campus, attending to academic requirements, and travelled around Ireland and across Europe on the weekends. We travelled to our homes in North America during the Christmas break in order to spend the holiday with family and friends. We took the same buses, the same flights, walked the same streets, and explored the same tourist attractions. We all made friends with local residents and with other international students, created friendship networks, and reflected on how our experiences with new people affected our sense of *Self*, our values, and what we wanted to do in the rest of our lives. I included autoethnography vignettes in this thesis, in the form of *immrama*, in order to identify the similarities and differences between the experiences of 21-year old undergraduate students (the average age of my informants) with those of this (then) 29-year old doctoral candidate who was interested in educational ethnography. This approach allowed me to not only be an observer, taking something away from the *field*, but also to study with my informants. Ingold (2011: 238) suggests that this is the goal of anthropology when he states:

Anthropologists work and study *with* people. Immersed with them in an environment of joint activity, they learn to see things (or hear them, or touch them) in the ways their teachers and companions do.

My informants were teachers for each other, introducing different frames of reference at the dinner table, on the train, and in introducing new people. They were equally my teachers, helping me to understand their experiences, and the effects studying abroad had on their developing identities. My own identity as a professional anthropologist was

developing through this sharing process as well. Wandering in an unfamiliar place was the catalyst for these transitions, but this wandering is not done in isolation.

What was most striking in the data I collected, and in reflecting on the process of fieldwork more generally, was the importance of peers as teachers. For both my informants and myself, it was those with whom we had regular social contact that helped us learn the most about other people, other cultures, and our own. University professors communicated the knowledge that students required to develop socio-cultural competences in the sense that they lectured on topics of importance to Irish history and society. There were not interactive seminars, however, and students were not offered opportunities to engage in these topics with local residents or other students. They had to create their own opportunities for learning as a result, constructing spaces within universities, creating their own societies, seeking out their own travel experiences, and engaging with local communities. The effect of these activities was not only becoming *adults* as described in Section 3.2 but also becoming well-rounded, independent, adaptable, intercultural, flexible, and innovative individuals who can thrive socially and economically wherever they find themselves. Developing a sense of *adulthood*, however, may not be a conscious process. Students follow their own interests, make new friendships as opportunities arise, and the result of this wandering through space and time is a concrete sense of confidence and independence that is characteristic of the definition of *adulthood* (outlined in Section 3.2). This shared experience often resulted in the exchange of ideas and stories among international students in relaxed social encounters. In my case, sharing experiences resulted through the interviewing process. Friends also form a unique resource, offering support and advice on how to create further opportunities for intercultural interactions, thereby avoiding the negative consequences of studying abroad, such as difficulties reintegrating into familial expectations, academic failure, and depression (Furnham & Alibhai 1985).

Many discourses examining international study experiences neglect the impact that travel and new friendships have on the overall development of the student. They focus on educational outcomes, the transferability of credentials, and the development of international careers obscure the human, lived experience of studying abroad. It is through

experiences, only possible through peer-interaction and successive trial and error, that students have the opportunity to develop their self-confidence and independence. As the market for educational tourism expands into lifelong learning strategies, higher education institutions, alumni associations, tourism companies, and international educators will increasingly consider these new opportunities.

10.3 Writing

Writing is a process of narration in which information is transmitted from an author to a reader. The process of writing, the medium of communication and the authority of the author, contribute to the establishment of texts, and how readers interact with them. Turner (1982: 87) has suggested that:

Narrative is, it would seem, rather an appropriate term for a reflexive activity which seeks to “know” [...] antecedent events, and about the meaning of those events.

This thesis represents my attempt to reflexively convey the meaning behind my doctoral fieldwork, the texts that arose from my interviews, and how both myself, and my informants, understand the importance that our experiences in Ireland had on the development of our future selves.

Given these shared experiences, and similar outcomes, both study abroad students and doctoral candidates can be understood to be *linguaging* because:

Through linguaging people come to make sense of and to shape their worlds. Through linguaging they become active agents in creating their human and material environment. (Phipps & Gonzalez 2004: 167)

By entering a new culture, intercultural learners are imagined to re-enter their own, to understand it better, and the role they wish to play in that culture as well as in relation to their new surroundings. Both study abroad students and aspiring anthropologists participate in this practice: learning to communicate with others in a different language; developing a

deeper appreciation of diverse frames of reference; and integrating that understanding into themselves, and how they will interact with people they meet in the future. This is derived just as much from personal interactions as from the creation and analysis of texts, and it is this process of intertextuality that I reflect upon in this section. Roberts *et al.* (2001: 64-5) have suggested that language plays a pivotal role in the development of identities because they act ‘as a means of representation – to represent the community to itself and to talk about others outside it – and in interactions as a way of claiming membership of a particular social and ethnic group’. I would go one-step further, and suggest that this is not limited to language learners, but also applies to doctoral students who have to learn host and academic languages. In my case, I engaged with educational, anthropological, and geographical fields, each of which possesses different academic languages.

Reflexivity is key to assessing both the intercultural competences of study abroad students and the contribution a doctoral thesis makes to the anthropological field. In the case of students who study abroad, Crawshaw *et al.* (2001) identified that student diaries are an effective resource for educators to assess the development of intercultural competences amongst language students. The budding anthropologist’s reflexivity is assessed in the reading of their doctoral thesis. Both documents account for the personal experiences of an individual that is living in an unfamiliar place, and interacting with new people on a daily basis. The similarity between interview and diary reflexivity that suggests transitions to *adulthood* are only possible when students reflect on their experiences, and what those experiences mean to them now, or might mean in the future.

Whether in the form of a diary, or an *immrama* crafted by their interviewer, the students are the hero-wanderers of their own stories, and the only people who were present for all events that might affect personal development. They tell their own story, in their own way, reminding themselves of the links between stories as they go. The story itself has no beginning, nor end, but rather traces a line (Ingold 2007) that has become momentarily intertwined with that of the interviewer, and of compatriot study abroad students in Ireland. In representing this journey in written form, the story of a student becomes a shared space in which the students, as the creators of their own narrative, share their experiences and

reflections with myself as the author of this thesis, and with you as the reader. These stories cannot exist in isolation, and the relationship between the student, the ethnographer, and the reader enables each to reflect on their common experiences.

As a literary tradition, *immrama* were helpful for me to understand the experiences of my informants, and to relate them to my readers. These stories do not have one author, but two, and they are constructed from the dialogue between them. If they had been written by the students themselves they would be diary entries, a text for them to refer to, and possibly for educators to assess. As a literary text created by two people, however, the *immrama* become shared stories, just as the students themselves shared their stories with others. The interview process not only creates a document for analysis within a doctoral ethnography, but it brings the reader along the journey as well, without distorting their voices with academic language. I have tried to recreate their sense of self, their senses of autonomy, confidence, flexibility, and tolerance that adapt to each new circumstance. Autoethnographic vignettes enabled me to create similar texts to those I generated for my informants, and similarly allowed my readers to follow not only my analytical journey but my experiential journey through the doctoral processes as well. Eisenhart (2001: 16) has suggested that ‘young scholars have some compelling critiques of conventional methods but little in the way of new methods or fresh insights on methods to offer’. In outlining my methodology in detail, and experimenting with a new writing style, I have tried to not only critique current narrative traditions in educational ethnographies, but I have suggested a new intertextual approach to creating and analysing data in ethnographic texts that is aligned with “textualist strategies” designed to better represent multiple voices, including the author’s’ (Eisenhart 2001: 19).

Both the interviewing and writing processes are inspired by memories. These reflections recall a different time or place than during the interview itself, and lend a degree of objectivity to analyses because the individual is not under a form of stress that might alter their reactions to events. In both cases Coleman’s (2010) ‘being *then*’ allows for the telling of stories based on not only what is remembered, but also on what is forgotten. Students were free to recall any event or experience, but in the role of interviewer I also

needed to establish if anything had been forgotten. Indeed, Freeman suggests that memory ‘has to do not merely with recounting the past, but making sense of it [...] in an interpretive act the end of which is an enlarged understanding of the self’ (1993: 29, cited in Kearney 2005: 155). While the students were in the midst of their study abroad experience, they were comparing their sense of *Self* to another, older self that had not studied abroad. This enabled me to reconstruct their stories in what Collins (2010) has characterised as a script or what Ingold (2007) suggests is an act of performance, retelling a journey, and in doing so, remaking the journey. In each subsequent retelling, rereading, and representing, their stories come alive again, framed by new experiences. This represents a form of textual wandering.

10.4 The field

I chose to write an ethnography, based in the ethnographic methods detailed (Chapter 9), in order to present my interviews with data collected from participant observation and survey responses because such an approach relies on student voices. I believe that these voices provide insights into the experiential dimension of studying abroad that relate how students interpret their liminal period in their new educational frame of reference. Along with my informants, I had to choose a university at which to conduct fieldwork, arrange accommodation, negotiate classes and societies, and learn about my new environs in the same fashion as the students described in this study. This is consistent with Kvale’s (1996: 4) idea of the travelling interviewer:

The potentialities of meaning in the original stories are differentiated and unfolded through the traveller’s interpretations; the tales are remoulded into new narrative, which are convincing in their form and are validated through their impact upon the listeners.

By employing multi-sited ethnographic methodologies and perspectives, this study highlights the *in situ* experiences of students in Ireland within the educational literature, as well as their experiences outside of traditional classrooms in a wider social world through which they wander in the *immrama* sections. Simultaneously, however, it contributes to the

disciplinary development of multi-sited ethnography within the field of anthropology, challenging the conventional conceptualisation of place envisioned by Gupta and Ferguson (1997) by including virtual and remembered spaces. In this sense, the ‘field’ is not a specific, localised and physical space. Instead, it is simply a group of people experiencing similar learning opportunities while simultaneously participating in multiple sites physically, in their imagination, and virtually using technology. The students themselves constructed a space, and endowed it with meaning. The research strategies detailed above sought to identify these spaces as new and authentic or legitimate sites of ethnographic concern, but are necessarily limited to student perceptions of Irish universities and their experiences as they move away from the university campus.

The educational field site has been a focus of the ethnographic lens for the better part of a century (Spindler 2000) and the selection of a field site is paramount to establishing professional identities for young anthropologists (Macía 2012). Therefore, in the case of this educational ethnography, I had initially set out to focus on a particular higher education institution, but this proved difficult (Section 9.4.3). As I began to craft my own field site, the confines of educational classrooms seemed less relevant.

A focus on the classroom as a site of learning by educational ethnographers limits the potential that ethnographic research offers for our understanding of social learning. It seems incredulous, therefore, that Pole and Morrison (2003: 3) would define educational ethnographies as focused ‘on a discrete location, event(s) or setting’. I have demonstrated throughout this thesis that this is not the case. The spaces that students create themselves are equally relevant for educational ethnographies, whether these are kitchens, airplanes, or heritage centres. These spaces between student-created sites are also relevant for ethnographic analysis, as every movement creates a continuous means for transitions between bounded locations that offer the same educational potential. By opening our perspective beyond the classroom, ethnographers not only find new fields to investigate, but can begin to connect social and academic learning, the acquisition of hidden curricula, and how student-led learning can affect transitions towards *adulthood*. Indeed, for my informants, it was the learning from peers, from travelling, and from trying new things that

had the greatest influence on this development. All of these activities would be excluded were we to limit educational ethnographies to bounded spaces. Even a multi-sited educational ethnography with this epistemology would be limited.

A final conundrum for both the study abroad student and the ethnographer is an increasingly globalised world. It is no longer necessary to remain in your study abroad destination for the duration of your studies, nor is it required for anthropologists to remain in the field. Increased access to affordable transportation and mediums of communication, such as the internet, allow both the student and the ethnographer to remain connected to their homes, their family, and responsibilities. They can travel back and forth as desired, and have an interest in maintaining those relationships while away (Roberts *et al.* 2001).

Given this transience, it can be difficult to locate these students in-person, but my multi-sited approach based on interviewing, participant observation, and survey responses offers insight into the rich reality of everyday student life. Knowledge of these experiences, however, can only be 'jointly constructed or negotiated between researcher and collaborator' (Dunne *et al.* 2005: 15). The *immrama* in this thesis, therefore, allow my readers to come to know the details of the students' lived experience and are vital in order to understand the effects studying abroad may have on the individual's development. These new spaces must be further researched in order to better understand the positive and negative outcomes of international wandering.

10.5 Concluding thoughts

Understanding the full scope and outcome of the learning experienced by students as they wander through international contexts cannot be summed up neatly in theories of tourist activities or analyses of confined learning environments. As I demonstrate in this thesis, in combining multiple theoretical perspectives I was able to develop a more robust understanding of what constitutes learning. The findings reported here, especially of personal development, are equally relevant for students who remain at local universities, or

who learn through apprenticeships, as well as those who wander between social worlds. Therefore, I have examined what makes the international case different and important. In building upon three previously established theoretical positions, transformative learning, educational tourism, and intercultural competences, I have explored how such experiences are not only incorporated into a sense of confidence in the self, but also in the personal development of students as they become more autonomous *adults*. Further studies are required that go beyond the current system of programme evaluations in formalised educational settings such as classrooms and museums, in order to encapsulate or capture the everyday learning students obtain by moving through a social world.

In this thesis, I outline the implications that have arisen because of data collection and analysis. There is a clear gender gap in participation rates for North American students that requires further research to identify gendered differences in experiencing learning through wandering. This will enable researchers to determine whether males have different experiences of these opportunities than their female counterparts. Travel was identified as the catalyst that drove students outside of their familiar frames of reference to experience new ways of living and being in the world. This might include experiencing new and uncomfortable forms of gender stereotyping, national or ethnic discrimination, different political systems, or poverty, depending on the travel destinations that students have chosen. Educational tourism alone cannot account for learning. Neither does travel necessarily result in intercultural learning. Non-curricular learning and reflexivity do not reliably result in transformational effects. Taken together, though, the resultant learning may be substantial since all learning leads to some degree of change. It is the magnitude of the change that makes learning transformational. If a student has experiences that change their point of view, this can make them question their culture, make them aware of the significance of other cultures, or alter their thinking as they experience learning that is considered transformative.

10.5.1 Limitations

There are several limitations to this study that I have already identified within the text of this thesis. Methodological limitations must be understood in order to identify how the research might have been done differently, and whether this might have had an impact on my research findings. It is inherently difficult to design an ethnography that encompasses every possible place in which informants might find themselves when they travel. Imagined or remembered spaces become just as important as physical spaces, influencing if, and how, students engage with their new environments. The combination of several research methods, including interviews, a survey, and participant observation created a rich ethnographic representation of transience and the perceptions of students as to the effects transience has upon them. I believe it was important to collect data during the multifaceted periods of wandering in which students participated to capture their reflections during their wandering through new spaces.

Of course, it was impossible for me to be in all places, so I relied heavily on students reflecting on their experiences, and their impressions of those experiences, because they were the only people present during all occasions of physical wandering through the world, virtual wandering around cyberspace, and imagined wandering of remembered space. This was a small study, but by comparing the experiences of a variety of students from different universities, I was able to identify anomalies and themes within my findings. Interview responses were important because I believe that these qualitative data best articulate student experiences, both positive and negative. Survey responses, however, presented an interesting second site for data collection that allowed for a period of reflection for student and ethnographer before being included in my analysis. I maintained a virtual identity that wandered the internet looking for students who were also trying to find each other. There seemed to be few difficulties in relation to power differential between my interviewees and myself as an ethnographer because I was also an international student, and not involved in their academic programmes in any way. Given the short-term nature of their travels in Ireland and the duration of my study, I was unable to follow-up with these

students at the end of their programmes to determine if this invigorated sense of self-confidence endured over time and if it affected their professional careers.

Other methodological approaches most certainly would have obtained different results. For example, oral history interviewing (D. A. Ritchie 2003) would have allowed for greater depth in constructing the *immram* of each student, especially in the context of family histories of mobility and education. Building on the work of Sutton and Rubin (2010), self-reporting psychological assessment tools would have allowed for greater comparability with previous work. Certainly, expanding the pool of potential interviewees to include parents, siblings, and faculty within the home institutions might have offered different perspectives on the self-reporting of students in my interviews. Each of these methodologies, however, cannot account for the *in situ* experience and reflections of students that I have been able to capture in Chapters 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8.

My analysis is by no means clear-cut, however. The inclusion of both physical and virtual activities presented a clear challenge. As ethnographic representations have expanded to include new ideas and new behaviours, it must now also contend with imagined and artificial worlds that informants create on a daily basis. This means that multi-sited ethnography must also include virtual ethnographic methods, and in effect follow two people rather than one: the student in the real world, and their virtual avatar moving through cyberspace. Do informants behave in the same fashion? Do they strive for the same results? Students occupied these virtual spaces at different stages of their sojourn, and used these spaces towards different ends. That is to say my informants utilised online resources in preparation for wandering as well as during the time spent wandering. Students wanted to find friends before they left home, to travel with those friends around Europe during their free time, and to maintain connections with them after their time in Ireland was over. Incorporating virtual methods was vital in identifying these social processes as one strategy, amongst many, to organise their sojourn. Such incorporation poses clear difficulties in creating anonymisation of informants to protect student identities because to quote from their activities makes them easily identifiable using search engines. Issues

relating to 'private' and 'published' online materials will become increasingly important for ethnographic research related to wandering.

While this is a liminal time, where students were in effect developing a new identity, ethnography was the best method to encompass all aspects of before, during, and after their ritualised time away. Two concrete implications for the development of ethnographic methods emerged from my work. First, further studies are necessary of this shifting from physical to virtual interaction and back again as part of a lived strategy for success and understanding. Limiting studies to the virtual or analogue realities is no longer possible because students in Section 7.2.3 were mobilising technology to facilitate their movements. Second, through travel the students were actively creating a new world for themselves not only academically and through friendships, but by imagining a newly expanded frame of reference. This outcome merits further study both *in situ* and post-return. As anthropologists, this finding challenges us to push our conceptualisation of the *site* farther than ever before, and I contend that it is a conceptualisation that will increasingly become useful given the expanding social worlds that informants inhabit simultaneously and imaginatively. Students now have dictionaries on their phones and access to translation websites in real time, facilitating intercultural communication in a way that would have been unimaginable for the students in Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1966) or Nash's (1976) studies. The single site conceptualisation of the past has become obsolete with the use of new social technologies when observing online student behaviour.

I established a multidisciplinary theoretical landscape within this thesis in order to compare my findings with those collected in other studies. Within such a theoretically grounded landscape, I may have been the only researcher collecting, comparing and analysing data that had been gathered by interacting with North American students *during* their sojourns through Ireland (O'Reilly *et al.* 2010: 595). During each stage of this process, I occupied multiple roles as student, researcher, and visiting fellow, and each of these roles might provide conflicting conclusions. It was important, therefore, to clearly establish myself, and my findings, within the larger academic corpus relating to the study abroad literature (Chapter 3). I have done this by locating my results within a robust

theoretical landscape and analysing the findings of other research. My research focus changed during the data collection period, but I believe this produced a more nuanced understanding of the experiences of wandering through new spaces.

10.5.2 Contributions to knowledge

Every doctoral thesis is meant to make a contribution to knowledge. For Dunne *et al.* (2005: 15) this contribution is only possible if the researcher acknowledges that the knowledge they have generated is ‘jointly constructed or negotiated between researcher and collaborator’. I have used this position as the foundation of my ethnographic writing process by including the *immrama* as a construction between us, based on our dialogue together. This profoundly reflects the interrelationship between interviewer and informant and how this influenced my representation of findings. I have made a strong case for the inclusion of autoethnographic writing in my thesis, and I hope future anthropology students will have the courage to create their own experiments in autoethnographic writing forms. The style I develop here is one based on the previous works of McCarthy Brown (2001) and Crapanzano (1985), but I hope this will produce different forms of writing as well, and that anthropologists will no longer have to wait until their careers have been established before they write personally reflexive ethnographies (Miller 2013).

My study addresses the wandering experience of international students that has been under-researched within the fields of anthropology and education. I have attempted to understand the personal development of individual students and the behaviours that brought this about. Through this thesis, I have endeavoured to develop a nuanced approach to educational ethnography and, in so doing I have highlighted an expanding area of study, one that begins to acknowledge the learning that students experience outside the classroom, in their personal lives, and through informal interactions with their friends. Chapter 7 also suggested that there is an inherent connection between experiential learning and personal development. In overcoming real and perceived risks, students developed a better

understanding of their abilities as well as gaining insights into their interests and imagining of their future careers’.

I examined and integrated three theoretical orientations: transformative learning, educational tourism, and intercultural competences. I determined that for study abroad students, transformative learning can result from international wandering. Further research is required, however, to determine the degree of change, whether positive or negative, and whether students who are not mobile undergo similar transformations that might suggest that this process is inherent to normal maturation processes or to university training itself. These changes would need to be measured prior to departure and upon return, as well as upon completion of the programme to compare the results over time and including other experiences.

10.5.3 Final reflections

I have tried to write an ethnographic thesis that develops and deepens our understanding of learning. Very early in my fieldwork I realised that this project was an inherently gender-biased project because of the composition of the cohort of participants. While this was not the intention of this study, it strongly influenced the students’ perceptions of their own experiences and learning. I also found the theoretical landscapes in the anthropological and educationalist fields limiting in that neither accounted for the cumulative effects of mobility on personal development. Transformative learning, educational tourism, and intercultural competences each presented one aspect of the study abroad experience, but could not account for the depth and impact of wandering as a form of learning. I hope that through this thesis I have identified new connections for future research in educational anthropology. I am acutely aware that my own analysis of this study has heightened my interest in this area of study and there remain issues and unanswered questions that will continue to encourage research in the future.

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Appendix 1: HEA statistics on domiciliary of origin of full-time students 2008/2009 academic year by gender registered at the University of Limerick (1 March 2009)

Country of Domiciliary	Number of Male Students	Number of Female Students	Total
Cameroon	1	0	1
Congo	0	1	1
Egypt	1	0	1
Ethiopia	2	0	2
Libya	2	0	2
Mauritius	1	0	1
Nigeria	0	2	2
South Africa	0	1	1
Togo	2	0	2
Uganda	3	1	4
Kuwait	1	0	1
Malaysia	3	0	3
Pakistan	9	0	9
Saudi Arabia	1	0	1
Singapore	0	1	1
Thailand	3	1	4
Canada	11	14	25
Jamaica	1	0	1
Mexico	2	0	2
United States	18	35	53
Argentina	0	1	1
Brazil	1	1	2
Colombia	0	1	1
Bahrain	0	1	1
Bangladesh	1	0	1
China	48	54	102
India	16	2	18
Iran	6	1	7
Iraq	1	0	1
Israel	1	0	1
Japan	0	4	4
Kazakhstan	2	0	2

Austria	1	3	4
Belgium	1	2	3
Bulgaria	1	1	2
Czech Republic	1	2	3
Denmark	0	1	1
Finland	1	1	2
France	7	17	24
Germany	17	21	38
Great Britain (excluding Northern Ireland)	18	26	44
Greece	1	1	2
Hungary	3	1	4
Ireland (including Northern Ireland)	4585	4285	8870
Italy	11	5	16
Latvia	0	2	2
Malta	0	1	1
Netherlands	3	0	3
Poland	4	9	13
Romania	4	8	12
Slovakia	1	0	1
Spain	2	6	8
Sweden	4	1	5
Albania	0	1	1
Bosnia and Herzegovina	0	1	1
Croatia	1	0	1
Norway	0	3	3
Russian Federation	3	5	8
Switzerland	1	0	1
Turkey	2	2	4
Australia	1	2	3
New Zealand	0	1	1
Total from UL	4811	4534	9345
Total Irish students	38139	53087	91226

Source: Higher Education Authority (HEA) (2009). Statistics on Domiciliary of Origin of full-time students 2008/2009 Academic Year by Gender, available online at <http://www.heai.ie/en/node/1114> [Accessed 6 June 2011].

Appendix 2: Student interview schedule

1. Could you please introduce yourself a bit.

Prompts: age, nationality, hometown

2. Could you describe your previous academic history and how you chose to study in Ireland?

Prompts: course of study, academic progress, how incorporating study abroad experience into degree plans, recommendations from others, motivations

3. Could you describe your academic programme in Ireland?

Prompts: course level, course assessments, style of learning/teaching, other students, requirements, impression of Irish higher education, facilities, credit transfers, choice of destination, funding your studies, family visits

4. What are your overall impressions of your experiences in Ireland?

Prompts: the university campus, city, Ireland, friends, anything surprising, social activities, accommodations, international office, cost of living, travel

5. What do you think are the main benefits of your time in Ireland?

Prompts: academic opportunity, personal development, employment skills, travel

6. What do you plan to do after your time here?

Prompts: university, postgraduate study, employment, travel

7. Would you recommend studying abroad to others?

Prompts: this university, Ireland, the world, advice to others

8. Do you have any questions for me?

Appendix 3: Request for formal interview (student)

Hi [INSERT STUDENT NAME],

My name is Kate Nielsen and I am a visiting research fellow at UL. I am conducting research on the experiences international students have while studying in Ireland and I noticed on the 'University of Limerick Exchange Students; Fall 2008'* Facebook group that you are an overseas international student.

I was wondering if it would be possible to meet with you and discuss your experiences of studying at UL, of Ireland generally, and what you hope to get out of your time here. We could meet on campus, and I'd be happy to buy you a cup of coffee for your trouble. I estimate this would take 20-30 minutes of your time.

These interviews will be contributing to my PhD research on educational tourism that I am completing at the University of Sussex. If you have any questions about my research, please do not hesitate to ask.

I hope to hear from you soon.

Best,
Kate.

*Several 'groups' on Facebook were used to identify potential participants. These included: Limerick Erasmus/Abroad Spring 2009, Travelling Europe, and University of Limerick Exchange Students; Fall 2008

Appendix 4: Online questionnaire

International Educational in Ireland Survey

Introductory Page

My name is Kate Nielsen and I am a PhD student in Education at the University of Sussex, UK. I am currently conducting research on the student experience of international education in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

This research will run from September 2008 until May 2009. Anyone who has studied in Ireland in the past 2 years is eligible to complete the survey. This includes language programmes, summer schools, ERASMUS exchanges, Study Abroad programmes, visiting and exchange students, as well as students who undertook their entire degree at a higher education institution (college or university) in Ireland.

The aim of this piece of research is to investigate the factors that influence students to incorporate mobility into their educational programmes, their experiences while studying abroad for short-, long-term, and complete degrees, and their experiences upon completion of their programmes and how this educational experience has affected their lives.

The questions included in this survey address the following:

- Some personal information about yourself and your motivations to study abroad.
- How you organised your educational studies abroad.
- Your experiences of studying in Ireland.
- Your reflections on your international experiences once you have returned.

You are free to withdraw from participation at any stage of the questionnaire. Any responses used in the write-up of this research project will be anonymous in order to offer

confidentiality to all respondents. Personal data collected as part of the survey will not be disclosed and the responses you supply will be kept in a password-protected file to protect your identity.

At the end of this survey will be several options. You can request that your responses not be included in the final analysis of the project at the end of the survey if you wish to do so. It would be very helpful if you are willing to answer some follow-up questions and there will be a place at the end of the survey to input your e-mail address if you consent to this. Finally, you may request a short report about the conclusions of the study.

On completion of the questionnaire you will gain access to a debrief form which will explain a little more about the study. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to get in touch with me.

This study was approved by the School of Education at the University of Sussex.

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study.

Kate Nielsen
School of Education
University of Sussex
Falmer
Brighton
East Sussex
BN1 9QQ
UK

Part One:

1. **This survey is concerned with international student while studying in the Republic of Ireland. Have you conducted (or are you conducting) part (or all) of your studies in Ireland? (Yes/No)**
2. **At which institutions have you studied?** (Please tick all that apply)
 - a. Dublin City University
 - b. National University of Ireland, Galway
 - c. National University of Ireland, Maynooth
 - d. Trinity College Dublin
 - e. University College Dublin
 - f. University College Cork
 - g. University of Limerick
 - h. American College in Dublin/Irish American University
 - i. Arcadia University
 - j. If other, please specify
3. **Current Age** (Selection from dropdown menu)
4. **Gender** (Male or Female)
5. **Country of Birth** (Selection from dropdown menu)
6. **Country of permanent residence** (Selection from dropdown menu)

Part 2:

7. **In this section you will be asked to fill out your educational trajectory. Please answer each question to the best of your ability. A section for 'other' programmes is available at the end of Part II for programmes that do not fit into one of the identified categories. Have you completed a higher education Degree or Diploma?** (Yes/No skip logic)
8. **At which institution did you complete your Degree or Diploma?** (Open-ended)
9. **What type of programme have you completed?** (Selection from dropdown menu with Bachelor, Master, PhD, Diploma, Certificate, Other Please Specify)
10. **In which country is this institution located?** (Selection from dropdown menu)
11. **What year did you begin your studies?** (Selection from dropdown menu)
12. **What year did you complete your programme?** (Selection from dropdown menu)
13. **What type of programme did you complete?** (You can choose more than one answer to reflect double majors and minors).
 - a. Architecture
 - b. Arts
 - c. Business
 - d. Computer Science
 - e. Education
 - f. Engineering
 - g. Fine Arts
 - h. Foreign Languages
 - i. Humanities
 - j. Kinesiology
 - k. Law
 - l. Medicine
 - m. Science
 - n. Social Science
 - o. Social Work
 - p. If other, please specify
14. **Have you completed a second Degree or Diploma?** (Yes/No)
15. **At which institution did you complete your second Degree or Diploma?** (Open-ended)
16. **What type of programme did you complete?** (Selection from dropdown menu with Bachelor, Master, PhD, Diploma, Certificate, Other Please Specify)
17. **In which country is this institution located?** (Selection from dropdown menu)
18. **What year did you begin your studies?** (Selection from dropdown menu)
19. **What year did you complete your programme?** (Selection from dropdown menu)
20. **What type of programme did you complete?** (You can choose more than one answer to reflect double majors and minors).
 - a. Architecture
 - b. Arts
 - c. Business

- d. Computer Science
- e. Education
- f. Engineering
- g. Fine Arts
- h. Foreign Languages
- i. Humanities
- j. Kinesiology
- k. Law
- l. Medicine
- m. Science
- n. Social Science
- o. Social Work
- p. If other, please specify

21. **Have you completed a third Degree or Diploma?** (Yes/No)
22. **At which institution did you complete your second Degree or Diploma?** (Open-ended)
23. **What type of programme did you complete?** (Selection from dropdown menu with Bachelor, Master, PhD, Diploma, Certificate, Other Please Specify)
24. **In which country is this institution located?** (Selection from dropdown menu)
25. **What year did you begin your studies?** (Selection from dropdown menu)
26. **What year did you complete your programme?** (Selection from dropdown menu)
27. **What type of programme did you complete?** (You can choose more than one answer to reflect double majors and minors).
 - a. Architecture
 - b. Arts
 - c. Business
 - d. Computer Science
 - e. Education
 - f. Engineering
 - g. Fine Arts
 - h. Foreign Languages
 - i. Humanities
 - j. Kinesiology
 - k. Law
 - l. Medicine
 - m. Science
 - n. Social Science
 - o. Social Work
 - p. If other, please specify
28. **Are you currently enrolled at a higher education institution?** (Yes/No)
29. **At what institution are you currently enrolled?** (Open-ended)
30. **What type of programme are you completing at this institution?** (Selection from dropdown menu with Bachelor, Master, PhD, Diploma, Certificate, Other Please Specify)
31. **In which country is this institution located?** (Selection from dropdown menu)
32. **What year did you begin your studies?** (Selection from dropdown menu)

33. **What year did you plan to complete your studies?** (Selection from dropdown menu)
34. **What type of programme are you pursuing?** (You can choose more than one answer to reflect double majors and minors).
- a. Architecture
 - b. Arts
 - c. Business
 - d. Computer Science
 - e. Education
 - f. Engineering
 - g. Fine Arts
 - h. Foreign Languages
 - i. Humanities
 - j. Kinesiology
 - k. Law
 - l. Medicine
 - m. Science
 - n. Social Science
 - o. Social Work
 - p. If other, please specify

Part Three:

35. **In this section you will be asked about your experiences while studying in Ireland. Please answer the questions below to the best of your ability. Three sets of questions will be asked for each study abroad period you have completed. You can enter up to 2 programmes. This first page asks for information about the programme itself. Please name the first institution where have you studied in Ireland?** (Selection from dropdown menu)
36. **What year did you commence these studies?** (Selection from dropdown menu)
37. **What year did you/will you complete these studies?** (Selection from dropdown menu)
38. **What kind of programme did you complete while away?** (Selection from dropdown menu with Study Abroad, Visiting/Exchange, ERASMUS, Entire Degree, Language School, Summer School)
39. **What motivated you to conduct part or all of your studies away?** Please tick all that apply.
- a. desire to live abroad
 - b. make new friends
 - c. improve career prospects
 - d. develop your cultural understanding
 - e. experience new teaching methods
 - f. study subjects not available at home
 - g. travel with friends
 - h. ties with family members
 - i. no specific reason
 - j. If other, please specify
40. **Was homework/revision required as part of this programme?** (Yes/No)
41. **How was the course assessed?** (Please tick all that apply)
- a. paper
 - b. midterm exam
 - c. final exam
 - d. reports
 - e. group work
 - f. If other, please specify
42. **Please assess the quality of institutional resources:** (Rating Scale: Excellent, Very Good, Average, Below Average, Poor, Not Applicable)
- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| a. course selection | k. language courses |
| b. course content | l. finances |
| c. course materials | m. contact with local students |
| d. professors/tutors | n. organised social activities |
| e. computing facilities | o. city amenities |
| f. health centre | p. local pubs/restaurants |
| g. library | q. access to municipal offices |
| h. sports facilities | r. interaction with immigration officers |
| i. accommodation | |
| j. international office | |

Part Four:

43. **This page asks about your experiences of your period of study away from home. Were there many international students on this course?** (Yes/No)
44. **Were there many local students on your course?** (Yes/No)
45. **What type of accommodation did you use while away?** (Please tick one)
- a. on-campus university accommodation
 - b. off-campus university accommodation
 - c. home stay
 - d. private rental
 - e. If other, please specify
46. **What kinds of social activities did you participate in during your free time?** (Please tick all that apply)
- a. studying
 - b. shopping
 - c. leisure reading
 - d. music
 - e. social organisations
 - f. religious observances
 - g. theatre
 - h. television
 - i. sports
 - j. movies
 - k. pubs/restaurants
 - l. museums
 - m. travel
 - n. If other, please specify
47. **Please discuss any difficulties while studying away from home?** (Open-ended)
48. **Were there any differences (positive or negative) between your two schools?** (Open-ended)
49. **Did you complete any language training prior to this trip in order to complete these studies?** (Yes/No)
50. **Please rate the following:** (Rating Scale: Excellent, Very Good, , Average, Below Average, Poor, Not Applicable)
- a. You are satisfied with your studies abroad
 - b. The programme met my expectations
 - c. The programme met my academic requirements
 - d. I will continue my studies after graduation
 - e. I will consider another study abroad programme in the future
 - f. Studying abroad has helped me/will help me gain employment
 - g. I would recommend studying abroad to others
 - h. I would recommend studying at this institution
51. **This section examines how you organised these studies. How did you learn about this programme?** (Selection from dropdown menu: Study Abroad Office, Internet, Friends/Family, Professor Recommendation, Exchange Company, Education Agent)
- a. If other, please specify
52. **Did you consult your International Education Office?** (Yes/No)

53. Was your exchange organised as a class fieldtrip by your home institution? (Yes/No)
54. Was this institution your first choice of programmes? (Yes/No)
55. If no, what was your first choice? (Open-ended)
56. Were your choices of institutions limited due to programme restrictions? (Yes/No)
57. Were your studies abroad recognised at your home institution? (Yes/No)
58. How did you fund these studies? (Please select all that apply)
- a. Scholarship/bursary
 - b. Loans
 - c. Savings
 - d. Family
 - e. If other, please specify
59. Please describe your impressions of the university and the city in which you studied. What stands out in your mind positively/negatively/uniquely? (topics might include friends, Ireland, surprises, activities, expectations, funding, accommodations, library, sports, international office, language). (Open-ended)
60. Have you completed another study session/programme abroad? (Yes/No)

Part Five:

61. **The next set of 3 pages will ask questions about your second experience of conducting your studies abroad. Please answer the questions below to the best of your ability. This first page asks for information about the programme itself. Which other institution where have you studied at in Ireland.** (Open-ended)
62. **What year did you commence your studies in Ireland?** (Selection from dropdown menu)
63. **What year did you/will you complete your studies in Ireland?** (Selection from dropdown menu)
64. **What kind of programme did you participate in as an international student in Ireland?** (Selection from dropdown menu with Study Abroad, Visiting/Exchange, ERASMUS, Entire Degree, Language School, Summer School)
65. **What motivated you to conduct part or all of your studies abroad?** Please tick all that apply.
 - a. use/improve language skills
 - b. desire to live abroad
 - c. make new friends
 - d. improve career prospects
 - e. develop your cultural understanding
 - f. experience new teaching methods
 - g. study subjects not available at home
 - h. travel with friends
 - i. ties with family members
 - j. no specific reason
 - k. If other, please specify
66. **Was homework/revision required while abroad?** (Yes/No)
67. **How was the course assessed?** (Please select all that apply)
 - a. paper
 - b. midterm exam
 - c. final exam
 - d. reports
 - e. group work
 - f. If other, please specify
68. **Please assess the quality of institutional resources:** (Rating Scale: Excellent, Very Good, Average, Below Average, Poor, Not Applicable)
 - a. course selection
 - b. course content
 - c. course materials
 - d. professors/tutors
 - e. computing facilities
 - f. health centre
 - g. library
 - h. sports facilities
 - i. accommodation
 - j. international office
 - k. language courses
 - l. finances
 - m. contact with local students
 - n. organised social activities
 - o. city amenities

- p. local pubs/restaurants
- q. access to municipal offices
- r. interaction with immigration officers

69. **This page asks about your experiences of your period of study abroad. Were there many international students on this course?** (Yes/No)
70. **Were there many local students on your course?** (Yes/No)
71. **What type of accommodation did you use while abroad?** (Select one)
- a. on-campus university accommodation
 - b. off-campus university accommodation
 - c. home stay
 - d. private rental
 - e. If other, please specify
72. **What kinds of social activities did you participate in during your free time?** (Please select all that apply)
- a. studying
 - b. shopping
 - c. leisure reading
 - d. music
 - e. social organisations
 - f. religious observances
 - g. theatre
 - h. television
 - i. sports
 - j. movies
 - k. pubs/restaurants
 - l. museums
 - m. travel
 - n. If other, please specify
73. **Please discuss any difficulties while studying abroad?** (Open-ended)
74. **Were there any differences (positive or negative) between your two schools?** (Open-ended)
75. **Did you complete any language training prior to this trip in order to complete these studies?** (Yes/No)
76. **Please rate the following:** (Rating Scale: Excellent, Very Good, Average, Below Average, Poor, Not Applicable)
- a. You are satisfied with your studies abroad
 - b. The programme met my expectations
 - c. The programme met my academic requirements
 - d. I will continue my studies after graduation
 - e. I will consider another study abroad programme in the future
 - f. Studying abroad has helped me/will help me gain employment
 - g. I would recommend studying abroad to others
 - h. I would recommend studying at this institution
77. **This section examines how you chose to conduct your studies abroad. How did you learn about this programme?** (Selection from dropdown menu: Study Abroad Office, Internet, Friends/Family, Professor Recommendation, Exchange Company, Education Agent)
- a. If other, please specify

78. **Did you consult your International Education Office?** (Yes/No)
79. **Was your exchange organised as a class fieldtrip?** (Yes/No)
80. **Was this institution your first choice of study abroad programmes?** (Yes/No)
81. **If no, what was your first choice?** (Open-ended)
82. **Were your choices of institutions limited due to programme restrictions?** (Yes/No)
83. **Were your studies abroad recognised at your home institution?** (Yes/No)
- a. Additional Comments
84. **How did you fund these studies?** (Please select all that apply)
- a. Scholarship/bursary
 - b. Loans
 - c. Savings
 - d. Family
 - e. If other, please specify
85. **Please describe your impressions of the university and the city in which you studied. What stands out in your mind positively/negatively/uniquely?** (topics might include friends, Ireland, surprises, activities, expectations, funding, accommodations, library, sports, international office, language). (Open-ended)

Part Six:

86. **In this section, please take a few minutes and reflect on your experiences of conducting part or all of your studies abroad. Do you have any advice for students considering studying overseas?** (Open-ended)
87. **Would you recommend studying in Ireland?** (Open-ended)
88. **If you were to choose your studies abroad again, would you choose Ireland again or some other destination?** (Open-ended)
89. **Please discuss whether you feel that you have gained any life experience/confidence as part of this experience?** (Open-ended)
90. **Have you undertaken any travel, in Ireland or abroad? If so, did you travel alone? Where did you go?** (Open-ended)
91. **Have any friends/family come to visit you in Ireland?** (Open-ended)
92. **After reflecting on your answers in this survey, is there anything you would like to add?** (Open-ended)
93. **Do you have any questions for the researcher about this survey, or the research project?** (Open-ended)
94. **Thank you for completing this survey. Please read the following form and confirm how your responses may be used in the research project. You must agree with the following statements in order for your answers to be used in this research project. If you do not agree, your responses will not be used.** (Agree/Disagree)
 - a. I have read and understood the information page at the beginning.
 - b. I consent to provide personal information for the use in this research project.
 - c. I am aware that the information provided will be treated as confidential.
 - d. I understand that the information I provide will be used as part of a research project which will be seen by the researcher and university staff, and may be published anonymously as part of a doctoral research project. All names and identifying information will be changed to protect my identity, and the identities of others.
 - e. I understand that by participating in this study I am in no way putting myself at risk.
 - f. I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary.
95. **Can the researcher contact you via e-mail for clarification or expansion of your responses in this survey?** (Yes/No)
96. **If you would like to receive a short report of these results once the study has been completed, please tick yes.**